DIVERSITY IN HOLINESS

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In accordance with the decrees of Urban VIII the author declares that in attributing heroic sanctity of life or supernatural powers to such of the subjects of these Studies as are not canonized saints, he has no intention of forestalling the judgement of the Church to which he submits himself without reserve.

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MOTHER JULIAN OF NORWICH

HOLINESS is one thing only, the Christ-life. "I live," says St. Paul, "now not I, but Christ liveth in me": and that saying gives the key to the whole subject. I am alive, he says, in the eyes of God, only so far and in such proportion as, looking at me, He sees Christ's life in me, sees me as Christ—rather, perhaps, sees Christ as me. For there is now but one human life pleasing to God, and that is Christ's—"*This* is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"—there is now no other way or truth or life but such as has been revealed to us by Him, there is no other name given to us under heaven whereby we must be saved, so that on each of those who are by Baptism incorporated with Christ it is incumbent to express His life in theirs. They are not to lose their identity in His, but they are to equate their lives to His, putting Him on, being formed into Him. It is more than just modelling themselves upon the precepts and counsels that He has given: by this mystical

incorporation with Him there is planted in their being a Christ-germ which is the life of their life and upon the development of which the whole of their supernatural quality depends. As God "utters" Himself in all creation, so are they to utter Christ in themselves—but always *as* themselves according to the varieties of time and place and circumstance and nature and disposition that are theirs. The Holy Spirit will bring to their minds all things that He has spoken: that is, will shape and mould to the special needs and powers and opportunities of each, the essence of His life.

Hence it is that in the annals of the Church there are saints—Christs grown to full stature—belonging to every conceivable category of human existence, to both sexes, to all ages, to every social station, to every type of character and every set of circumstance or opportunity, as diverse one from another as the stars in the skies, but all one and identical in the one-ness of their spirit with His. God is in all His creation as the voice of the singer is in his song, and in like manner is the Christ-life in the life of all His saints.

It is the main purpose of these papers to

exhibit this identity-in-diversity in the persons of a selected group of Christians of recognized holiness, belonging to different ages and living under differing circumstances, whether exterior or interior. Not all of them are canonized saints, for after all, canonization is no more than an extrinsic mark of the approval of the Church, conferred by the leading of the Holy Ghost and chiefly for the sake of us others, here and there upon one of the many whose holiness is already, for the most part, patent and established. Indeed, it may be that one feels more at ease in one's study of those who have not received this seal of authenticity, for it is unquestionable that the halo may dazzle rather than illuminate those of us who look to the saints for points of resemblance to our own conditions and necessities, and for example and guidance in our own efforts to be something of what they were. Those who are 'raised to the Altar' seem often, to our admiring eyes, to be raised, too, out of our own humble world, and therefore to exceed our hope of profitable personal contact with them. We have to remind ourselves, in spite of this, that holiness really means no more than the achievement of

a task which God has laid upon us all and which, therefore, all of us have to attempt. The English word 'holy' derives from the same root as its homophone 'wholly': it suggests that not to be holy is to be unfinished, incomplete, to have failed, and that the saint is nothing more exceptional than a 'whole man'—what Our Lord commanded us all to be, "Be ye therefore perfect [complete] as your Heavenly Father is perfect," setting this impossible ideal before us in order that we might never rest satisfied that we have reached the limit of perfection that is required of us.

The means by which, in spite of all our weakness, we may keep, and still aim at, the ideal set before us, is the development within us of that Life which in Christ Himself did actually reach it and which He now, through the 'unutterable groanings' of the Holy Ghost, labours to promote within us. And what can be a better object-lesson to our hesitations and our fears than the spectacle of those men and women (many of them so ordinary and so homely) in whom we may watch that growth triumphing over just such obstacles, and in the midst of just such disabilities, as beset ourselves?

MOTHER JULIAN OF NORWICH

MOTHER JULIAN OF NORWICH was born in the first half of the fourteenth century. It was the age of Poictiers and Crecy, a heroic age in many respects, or at least a manly age, when the pursuit of adventure was not haunted by the desire of ease or comfort or troubled by the fear of pain or hardship. But it was an age, too, of many terrible things. The Black Death had ravaged Europe, diminishing the population of England, for example, by nearly one-half: and behind the panoply of arms and chivalry an ugly degeneracy was already setting in, with the growth of luxury and oppression of the poor, leading to bloody uprisings and reprisals and (as always under such circumstances) to religious unrest. Wyclif was born about the same date as Mother Julian and had already made himself felt as a disruptive influence at the time that she was writing her Revelations. These matters do not, however, concern the object of this brief study of her spirit and teaching except in so far as they may help to locate her, as it were, and to bring her a little out of the dim half-light in which (as Elia has remarked) we so often tend to view our forefathers of the 'Dark Ages,' as if they really did grope their

way about in a sort of permanent gloaming. The conditions of her day were, indeed, and allowing for obvious differences, not so very much unlike those of our own. On a lesser and less clear-cut plan there were the same problems of antagonism between property and poverty, between licensed slavery and unlicensed liberty, between justice and injustice, and men were as perplexed by and as resentful of failure and death, of the manifold inequalities of fortune and happiness and of the never-ending quarrel of the body and the soul, then as now. No doubt there was then as great a proportion as now of persons to whom Providence and the love of God for men had become hollow-sounding phrases: there was religious fervour and belief, but there was also religious hypocrisy and disbelief. If there was great piety in many quarters, and that perhaps of a more genuine and simple quality than much of what passes for such to-day, no doubt there was a great deal, too, of indifference as well as of downright impiety. So that we shall be mistaken if we allow a matter so unimportant as a date to constitute a barrier between the outlook, the problems, the mentality, of the

England in which Mother Julian lived, and those of our own.

She had lived the life of an Ankress from an early age, and it appears to be established that her Revelations occurred in her thirty-first year. They lasted for no more than a few hours, beginning early on May 8th, 1373. There were sixteen *Shewings* in all, and they ended with her complete restoration to health from a sickness which had lasted a week and of which she had very nearly died.

These are the *Revelations of Divine Love*, most fitly so called, for the inspiring theme of them all is the love of God for man ; and from them she draws a doctrine of God's unceasing and minute care for every detail, no less than for the whole grand scheme, of human life, and of His ineffable nearness to and occupation with us all, with a consequent assurance of safety, of certainty, of personal concern with even the least of His creatures, such as should meet every juncture of life, even the most desperate.

No one will ever grasp the full implications of the Faith, or ever be able to move about at ease in it, who is insensible to its mystic aspect. Without that, one is left with a host of most

practical problems which must remain for ever unsolved and insoluble. By the 'mystic aspect' one means radically that apprehension of the relation between God and ourselves which takes into account His *otherness* from us and realizes that it is just because of this otherness that He is able so completely to identify Himself with us and to enter into, without disturbing or altering, all the accidents of human existence: that He is able to be in, though not of, even what seems to us bad or cruel, and to enter intimately into our human ways without clashing with them. Of all the happenings of life, however strange or difficult they may seem, she has, on His authority, but one thing to say: "Wouldst thou witten Our Lord's meaning in this thing? Wit it well: love was His meaning." And again, "Ere God made us He loved us: which love was never slacked nor ever shall be."

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." It is impossible for us now to understand how this can be, for there are so many things that manifestly are very far from 'well' and from which it is no less impossible to see how anything but ill can ever come. Are we then only

to trust that somehow, in the end, ' when God has made the whole complete,' some sort of balance will be struck, some mysterious cancelling out of evil with good will take place, there will be a dovetailing of the irregularities of life into one unbroken whole? Meantime, are we to make what shift we can to bear with the present evil, in blind reliance on God's promise that so it shall be, and that later we shall see and understand how?

This is not what Mother Julian teaches. It is true that she does not attempt to explain to us the working of God's Providence, which is to draw good out of everything and to ' make all well '—for no mortal mind could either explain or understand that. But her emphasis is rather on the truth that, even now, all *is* well —" See! I am God: see! I am in all thing: see! I do all thing: see! I lift never mine hands off my works, nor ever shall, without end: see! I lead all thing to the end I ordained it to from without beginning, by the same Might, Wisdom, and Love whereby I made it. How should anything be amiss? "

She saw God ' in a point ': all His works as one thing, finished and complete, as the colours of the spectrum are one and complete in the

pure white ray. There is no deed to be done, as if in repair or adjustment of what is gone wrong : the deed *is* done : it is the one deed that there is, for it is the deed by which God is God. Nothing is done but just this, that the Son is born of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son, from 'without beginning' to without end. How, indeed, should anything be amiss, since all that is is this ? There is no doing, no being, outside this : the very individualities of created things have the reality of their being and their act only in the manner in which they participate in the perfections of God—are utterances of Him, are words, self-expressions of Him.

But the dreadful problem of sin and its consequences faces her. She knows that sin, being evil, is 'no-deed,' and is therefore not part of the 'all-thing' which is the act of God. But this hardly offers a practically satisfactory answer to the average man to whom sin is a very real thing indeed. Here, again, faith is our only support. We *must* believe that sin is real and actual and the cause of all the miseries of the world : that it is so because (being an opposition to the will of God) it is an un-creative, destructive thing : and that it is attri-

butable to the sinner and offensive to God. But how to square this with Our Lord's assurance that 'all will be well'—still more, with the necessary implication that all *is* well? Our minds will not compass the synthesis of such irreconcilables: only in the infinite Wisdom of God, 'in a point,' is it accomplished. To understand it now would demand in us a mode of comprehension as incompatible with our nature as an appreciation of Art would be with the nature of an irrational animal. But faith, if it does not explain, may still satisfy—*praestet fides supplementum*: "It behoved that there should be sin: but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well." But, "Ah! good Lord, how might all be well, for the great hurt that is come, by sin, to thy creatures?" And to this she received the reply that Adam's sin was "the most harm that ever was done, or ever shall be, to the world's end," but that the Redemption is more pleasing to God "and more wonderful, without comparison, than ever was the sin of Adam harmful": wherefore, "since I have made well the most harm, then it is my will that thou should know thereby that I shall make well all that is less."

Our Lord said to her, " Thou shalt see thyself that all manner of thing shall be well " : He will make all well " by a deed which the Blessed Trinity shall do at the last Day "— only then shall we know how, when we shall know as we are known. But Mother Julian shows us how to see, even now, something of the working of that great deed. By that incorporation, that one-ing, with Christ which is ours, there has been established between us and Him an ineffable union which makes one thing of our human lives and His, giving to ours a divine quality so that all our travail that comes from our sin is His very own salvific travail and pain which abolishes sin and redeems the world. " I understood that we be now, in Our Lord's meaning, in His cross with Him in our pains and our Passion, dying." " We are in dis-ease and travail with Him, as our frailty asketh." " I saw a great one-ing betwixt Christ and us, for when He was in pain we were in pain." " As long as He was passible He suffered for us and sorrowed for us : and now He is uprisen and no more passible, yet He suffereth with us." The mystery of sin, in the face of God's irresistible will and His all-embracing activity in all that is, remains : but

one has a glimpse of how it is that *out of the eater cometh forth meat, and out of the strong cometh forth sweetness*—of how, in spite of all appearances that would convince us of the contrary, all is well.

And the reason. It is that everlasting love that God has for us : " He is our clothing that for love wrappeth us, claspeth us, and all becloseth us for tender love that He may never leave us." And all things that are, so portentous as they seem to us who see them out of all scale and proportion in the less than half-light of our earthly intelligence, are " a little thing, the quantity of an hazel-nut," yet in this little thing are three properties, " The first is that God made it : the second is that God loveth it : the third, that God keepeth it."

Hence Mother Julian did not, could not, think of pain as mainly an evil. She saw it first and foremost as the blessed instrument of our one-ing with Christ—*Solutio omnium quaestionum*—and as the opportunity of that literal compassion with His suffering which should make it our own, with all that that means and all the peace and security that flow from it. That knowledge made ' all manner of thing well ' indeed : and for her, the anxious problems

that tax our faith simply did not exist—how, thus, should anything be amiss ?

If God were of the same nature as ourselves, no matter how immeasurably more wise and perfect, how should we justify His conduct of the world, even so far as our limited intelligence and experience show it to us ? How should we reconcile His power with His performance, how explain unmerited suffering, the triumph of wrong and the defeat of good, the rule of darkness and ignorance, the prevalence of evil in every department of created being ? There can be no solution, no reconciliation, between faith in the existence of an all-powerful, all-good God who governs the world, and the evidence before our eyes of the evil that fills it from end to end, but in the recognition of the incommensurability of His Being with any order of being of which we have, or could have, cognizance. Our very ignorance of the nature of such a Being justifies us in believing that with Him it may be—*must* be—' all well.' A well-known spiritual writer has called this a ' noble nescience,' for to be resigned to it argues a courage and a robust faith which will draw upon the best that is in human nature to support them. Upon this faith we may build,

and Mother Julian shows us how to build, belief in a purposive Love surrounding, sheltering, cherishing us in every juncture of our lives, shaping the least no less than the greatest of our circumstances to the one end, that fulness of content for which we were created in the direct knowledge and everlasting possession of God who made us for Himself in such wise that in nothing less than Him can we ever find rest.

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

THE life of St. Francis de Sales, 1567–1662, still within the afterglow (or the penumbra) of the Renaissance, covered a very remarkable period in the Church's history. Luther had been dead twenty-one years and the Counter-Reformation had gathered great strength in the interval, to which St. Francis himself later contributed in no small measure by his amazingly successful missionary excursions into the Savoyan province of Le Chablais. The Council of Trent, which embodied the true principles of reform within the Church, had held its final session four years before he was born, and these principles had been, and were still being practically exhibited and illustrated by the astonishing galaxy of saints that adorned this new era of her history. The lifetime of St. Francis de Sales was contemporaneous with, or at least overlapped at one end or the other, that of nearly a score of the most illustrious figures in the annals of sanctity. St. Pius V, the Dominican Pope, from whose

white habit the now established dress of the Supreme Pontiff derives, reigned over the Church for the first five years of the saint's life. St. Charles Borromeo, St. Philip Neri, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross, St. Francis Borgia, were still living during his early youth, as also were the three boy saints, Stanislaus, Aloysius, and (a little later) John Berchmans. Other contemporaries were St. Vincent de Paul, the three Saints Peter (aptly symbolic name for the day !) Canisius, Claver, and Fourier, St. Jane Frances de Chantal, St. John Francis Regis, and St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi.

Other contemporaries, interesting from a rather different point of view, were Queen Elizabeth of England, and that hardly less enigmatic personage Henri IV of France. St. Francis was a child of four when the Turks were overthrown at Lepanto, and he had just come of age when the Invincible Armada sailed out to defeat and destruction.

His day was like a throw-back to the Apostolic Age, a second visible coming of the Holy Ghost. There can be little doubt that this epoch marked a veritably new date in the practice, as distinguished from the doc-

trine, of the Church—importing something of a condescension to a sanctified humanism, a 'vulgarization' (the word is not intended to carry the slightest reproach) for the benefit of the ordinary average Catholic, of a thing hitherto considered as more or less esoteric and altogether exceptional. You might call it 'Heaven Opened To Christians'—sanctity made (not easy, indeed, but) practicable for all. Of this Gospel St. Francis was the Apostle. Pre-eminently he showed the way to a readjustment of worldly circumstances with spiritual demands. His doctrine amounted to a synthesis of the sometimes apparently contradictory postulates of the life of perfection, showing that these are reconcilable, and should be reconciled, in any state of life, however far it might seem superficially to diverge from the accepted canons of the science. He said of himself that he was not 'a man of extremes': no, but he envisaged nothing less than the best, though it might seem to the casual student of his writings and direction that he was sometimes content with the second-best. No error concerning him could be more fundamental than this. All his aim was to extract

the best obtainable (obviously not always the best imaginable) from his penitents. He may, as a shrewd analyst of saintly psychology has hinted, have now and then put just a little too much honey on the lip of the cup that he presented to them : but he was one of those miraculous geniuses who see centuries ahead of their own time, and experience has proved that the guidance of St. Francis de Sales, devised for the vacillating and bewildered souls of his day, is quite peculiarly adapted to the needs of souls certainly not less bewildered and very much more vacillating, who in our own day have to grapple with problems so different from theirs.

He has been called the chief of the ' modern ' saints. This means, one supposes, that his type of sanctity was one with which the modern mind, no longer torn between the early violent recoil from pagan mentality and the late partial relapse into that mentality brought about by the Renaissance, finds itself in sympathy, for the outstanding characteristic of his school of holiness was *balance*, in which are involved breadth and moderation and tranquillity. His was the sort of sanctity that attracts admiration but does not

frighten, and that seems (surprisingly) to *fit in* with the average human life instead of clashing with it. The average man can see himself in that galley instead of having to regard it as a station demanding a special physical and spiritual constitution, almost a special order of being. He has been accustomed to think of the saints as persons so peculiarly privileged, so aided and protected, so unlike himself in every particular, that by no stretch of his imagination can he fancy them as objects for his practical imitation. In addition, he has come to think that a saint who is not a religious, or at least a priest, is something anomalous. The net result of prepossessions such as these has been to remove sanctity to an almost inaccessible region, far over the horizon of the average Christian, and to establish the belief that it *must* be a hard, bleak, dreary path that leads to it, for is it not true that the saint must never take pleasure in anything for its own sake : that he must find no rest in any creature, nor seek it : that he must disown all credit for the good that he does, nor even admit to himself that he has done any good : that the world must be his bitter and unrelenting enemy

wherein he may find no joy nor satisfaction : that the so-called natural affections must be sterilized into complete impersonality, his native faculties denied the opportunity of exercise, his body treated as a thing inherently bad and corruptive ?

Persons who think like this do not pause to ask themselves whether, indeed, such a philosophy of life could stand the test of practice for a week. One supposes, justifiably perhaps, that the question of practice does not trouble them. But even as a matter of pure speculation one wonders how they can square such a theory with the unquestionable fact that Christ has laid the achievement of holiness upon us as an *obligation :* for it is a Commandment, according to Him, that we should love God with the whole of ourselves—mind, heart, soul and strength—and holiness, to put it in a phrase, *is* no other thing than the love of God. If they are right, then God has so ordered our life that the one thing that we are here to do with it is also the very hardest of all the things that we could do with it—so hard, indeed, that the overwhelming majority of us simply cannot do it.

No doubt it is true that things have been

said about the saints, and perhaps even by the saints, which lend a very colourable authority to such views. It is indeed the sin of one school of hagiographers that they have been so constantly at pains to make the lives of the saints seem as extraordinary and as unusual and difficult as they could—*ipsi viderint!* And as regards the saints themselves, it is one thing to live a heroic life and quite another order of things to be able to give an account of its principles. If they were not human they were not saints, and if they were human they were liable to inequality in the power of expression as other human beings are, and were as truly the subjects of differentiation by character, sex, nationality, upbringing, age, social condition, intellectual power and other like circumstances as anyone else. Canonization affords us a guarantee of their doctrinal and moral orthodoxy, but not at all of their analytical or expository ability. We should not pay an equal attention to the ascetical teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas and of Brother Giles. The Curé d'Ars had certain rigorist, not to say Jansenist-like, principles of direction which few would approve to-day. St. Bernard, on his death-

bed, asked pardon of his body for his over-harsh treatment of it.

The life and teaching of St. Francis de Sales came as a ray of new light upon the problem. He used to say that the saints are indeed the salt of the earth, but that for that very reason they must be *in* the earth—their life must be capable of being lived among the surroundings and accidents in which the lives of ordinary men are lived—or what profits their savour? For goodness, he insisted, does not do violence to our nature: it does not restrict but expands it: grace, falling upon it, illumines it and brings out its beauty as the light of the sun brings out the beauty of a stained-glass window. And this illumination is an all-round effect: no more than do the rays of the sun in the example which he gives, does it select some details and leave others unlit.

It is true that in ordinary material (or at least non-spiritual) affairs we can usually attain to excellence in any one direction only at the cost of sacrificing other possibilities of achievement; but it is characteristic of the life of the soul that its perfection has a use for, demands the exercise of, *all* its powers, as

indeed we should expect, seeing that they all have as their proper end and significance nothing else than the perfect service of God in which alone consists our own perfection. The only narrowness, therefore, that he would admit is such as is inseparable from the qualities of firmness, of determination not to compromise, of exclusiveness of aim, which do sometimes involve the refusal or neglect of opportunity: for the use of some of the 'creatures' which God has given us for our sanctification is that we should *not* use them —certain common instincts, for instance, otherwise legitimate, which may be lawful and helpful for one and harmful for another, or right and good under one set of circumstances but bad under another.

He would not, however, have anyone think that holiness is a cheap thing: quite otherwise, he once said that sanctity was the greatest of all miracles. But one feels that he had then in his mind the promise of Our Lord that to those who have faith—the *real* thing, such as He demanded so rigorously of His Apostles, were it only as small as a mustard-seed, a pin-point—greater miracles of grace than those symbolic material ones which had

so astonished them, would be commonplaces : the most mountainous obstacles would be removed and cast into the sea. But he strenuously combated, as a pernicious falsehood, the common persuasion that sanctity is so difficult a thing as to be practically out of the reach of the ordinary Christian, and he insisted that there are no circumstances of human life which need be inimical to its attainment.

For this he was, even in his lifetime, abused and derided. Mr. Worldlyman likes to think that Christian Perfection is an anomalous thing : he would be very uncomfortable if he believed otherwise. The Jansenists were of that cast of thought, and it pleased them to make the way, not of the transgressor alone but of the aspirant no less, a hard one. So that when, thirty-nine years after his death, the Bishop of Geneva was beatified, pious people were seriously scandalized : and still more so when, after four more years, he became St. Francis de Sales. He had made it all too easy, they said : almost as if they grudged anyone becoming a saint. He had made holiness—the Love of God, mind you !—*too easy*. It ought to be difficult, then, an uncom-

mon thing, a thing against nature? A contemporary author thought that he had said something very biting when he called the path to holiness, as traced by the Saint, 'a pleasant road.' And all that St. Francis had said (or done) was to show that it is not strange to love God: that God has not made it frantically difficult to do so: that He has not given us one kind of nature and then made demands upon us which could only be met if we had a totally different one. He had only said that God has made us for Himself so that we shall be for ever restless until we rest in Him, and that we *can* rest in Him now, if we will, and yet be ourselves.

His method of direction was gentle, as was Christ's: but nevertheless, like Him, he made uncompromising demands upon those who submitted to it. We are to learn of Christ meekness, kindliness, and humility of heart: but also, that we are unfit to be His disciples if we do not hate our life, carry our cross, forsake all. Gentleness in this matter is by no means the same thing as softness or weakness: it allows for sensuality and frivolity but it does not condone them, it aims to win rather than to terrify people out of them. If St. Francis de

Sales permitted to some of his penitents interests and amusements which another in his place might have condemned as positively incompatible with a devout life, it was not because he imagined that these things were going to sanctify them nor because he thought them the best things for them to do, but because he knew very well that few persons are ready for a sudden ' conversion of manners ' if that is to be permanent, and that if their desire of perfection, however small at the moment, was genuine, these things would very soon become distasteful and be abandoned without any further urging from him. For above all he required genuineness and sincerity, and where he saw that these were lacking he limited any further dealing with such a soul (if he could not disembarrass himself of the charge altogether) to preserving it at least from total loss. But where he discerned the marks of a true vocation to perfection, he became an exacting guide. He taught incessant watchfulness over one's faults and evil tendencies, even the smallest, and unremitting effort to practise the Christian virtues in a high degree. But though he would never minimize or economize in this matter, neither did he favour violence over it. Violence too

often defeats itself since it bears in itself the seeds of impermanence: and he forever preached tranquillity, patience with self, cheerfulness, even in the midst of the most resolute struggle. All was to be subordinated to *fidelity*. But fidelity is nothing if it costs nothing, and it would cost nothing if it did not imply the likelihood of many revulsions of feeling, many failures and backslidings, many doubts and fears and defeats. Holiness, he insisted again and again, is a matter of the will: and it is consummated not necessarily in achievement but essentially in perseverance. And it is a matter of love, not of fear. It comes, normally, little by little as real love comes, invading the soul not (except in certain very special cases) as by some sudden and tremendous illumination but gradually, peacefully, though irresistibly, as daylight steals into the sky at dawn.

Holiness, in his conception of it, should be an all-round quality without abruptness or eccentricity: it should not involve the suppression in us of anything that is not in itself bad, for the likeness to God (we call it the 'approach' to God) which is its essence must be incomplete in the proportion that it does

not extend to the whole of us. So we must be truthful to ourselves about ourselves, and we shall lose as much by not seeing the good that really is in us as by fancying that we see good that is not there at all. It is as right and due that we should thank God for the virtue that His grace has established in us as that we should ask His forgiveness for our sinfulness that hinders His grace. It is no derogation from the truth of this statement to recognize that, in point of fact, the nearer we draw to God the less will we think of either, for this indicates no more than that there is growing within us the realization that all our goodness is His and that our very wretchedness makes us the fitter objects of His mercy and power.

St. Francis de Sales did not confuse the Counsels with the Precepts : he was mindful of Our Lord's words to the young Ruler, " If thou *wilt* be perfect." But he let it be known that his manner of direction would be of little service to one who having faced the issue should voluntarily choose the lower level.

BROTHER LAWRENCE

THE distinctive note of practical mysticism—its defining element—is the *felt presence* of God. Neither the nature nor the manner of the feeling can be described, much less explained, for it does not consist of intellectual concepts, nor of imaginative phantasms, nor is its appeal to the sensitive desire or will, and these are the ordinary channels by which we acquire or impart knowledge of things. Nothing will satisfy the mystic which falls short of that completeness of apprehension which he knows that his ordinary powers simply cannot give him, and his uneasiness and the source of his unceasing quest beyond their boundaries is no other thing than his sense that only God Himself can so render Himself known to him.

As all the highest authorities agree, the progress of the mystic is through increasing passivity. But this is not the passivity of inaction or mere blank receptivity : it is a condition only to be won by extreme interior and exterior activity : negatively, by detaching the desire

from all things less than God : positively, by deliberately embracing all that is Godlike and Godward—mortification (one may say, to sum it up) and the cultivation of virtue, and especially and before all, the effort to achieve in the meantime (poor substitute though that be for the reality) the utmost habitual awareness of God that one's normal powers can give one. Those are very grievously mistaken who suppose that the pilgrims of the Mystic Way possess somehow a dispensation from the pain and effort and fatigues of the ascetical life.

The true apprehension that such a soul has of the presence of God is imageless and without any localization : if it is true to say that God is then thought of as more *within* than *without* one it is also true that even this does not properly express the quality of the *feltness* of His presence, which is recognized as something far more subtle and less definitive than either term implies. A better medium of expression might perhaps be found in the similes of harmony or rhythm or other dynamic unison. But even such analogies fall far short of the verity, and one must in the end leave unexplained what is inexplicable in terms of any other level of experience than its own.

At first it is common for the soul advancing towards closer union with God to conceive of His presence under a confused spatial image and to picture Him as actually *beside* him, or *surrounding* him, or as stationed in some vaguely determined direction in relation to him. It was with some such intent that Cardinal Cusa, in his *De Visione Dei*, asked the monks to whom he addressed that work to compare the presence of God to the unvarying *gaze*, following the spectator wherever he may stand, of certain portraits an example of which he presented to their monastery. But actually it will only be when giving an account of his sensations to a third person, or reflecting on them himself (which he will rarely do), that anyone adverts to these features of his experience. Long before what we have called the ' mystic element ' has entered formally into his life the simple fact of God's unremitting ' attention ' to him (with a conjugate attention on his part to God) will, without speculation as to its mode or nature, have become the dominating factor of his inner life. More and more will that presence become the thought behind all other thoughts in his meditation and the motive beneath all the other motives of his spiritual activity. He will

therefore be led to use every means, by reflection and aspiration, to make it actual and habitual, and he will not notice (or care) that at the beginning the forms in which he represents this truth to himself may be crude or even childish.

"I cannot imagine," says Brother Lawrence, "how religious persons can live satisfied without the practice of the presence of God." And again, "Were I a preacher I should preach this practice before all other things whatsoever."

It is as the apostle, in a very special manner, of this vital secret of the spiritual life that the subject of this study presents himself. Nicholas Hermann, in religion Brother Lawrence, was born in Lorraine in 1611. Nothing, it seems, is known of his circumstances beyond that they were very humble. At the age of eighteen he became a soldier and fought in the Thirty Years War under Wallenstein. He was badly wounded in the leg—quite possibly, according to the dates, at Lutzen, where the victorious Protestant champion, Gustavus Adolphus, was killed—in consequence of which he limped for the rest of his life. After his discharge from the army he went to Paris where for many years he

was a man-servant in the establishment of one M. Fieubert, a government official. Nothing is recorded of him during this period except that, in his own words, he ' was a great awkward fellow who broke everything,' but it is known that between the dates of his leaving domestic service and entering religion he made an unsuccessful attempt to live the life of a hermit.

In the year 1666 he was received as a lay-brother into a convent of Discalced Carmelites in Paris, and died there twenty-five years later, having spent practically the whole of that time in charge of the kitchen. Although he did not enter religion until he was fifty-five years old his was not a case of ' conversion ' in the popular sense of the word. He himself places the turning point of his life in the very year in which he joined the army, for he says that it was when he was eighteen that the sight of a fruit-tree, bare and leafness in the winter yet within a few months to put on again the luxuriance of summer, impressed upon his mind such a vivid sense of the power and providence of God as " set him perfectly loose from the world and kindled in him such a love of God that he could not tell whether it had increased in the

more than forty years that he had lived since." One regrets that nearly nothing is known about him during the years that passed before he became a friar, but the account that we have of his spiritual life in the convent is evidently descriptive also of the practices and conclusions of a long period of previous saintly endeavour.

The sources of the information that we have of his interior life and of the principles upon which he regulated it are the 'Conversations,' which we owe to the devotion of the Abbé de Beaufort, Grand Vicar to Cardinal de Noailles, who kept notes of his interviews with the Brother: the 'Maxims,' which are his own private jottings: and a series of sixteen letters written chiefly to religious women: to which may be added a 'Character,' or general appreciation of him, by the same Abbé de Beaufort. The whole combines to indicate a very simple scheme of spirituality which he crystallized into the phrase 'The Practice of the Presence of God.' He was generally averse to anything considerable in the way of detailed and ordered methods whether of prayer or of ascetical practice, which he said often serve rather to divert

the mind from God, the true end of all effort, to the effort itself, which, however, has no significance except as it is a means to that end. The Love of God was, he declared, the one aim to which we should direct all our attention and desire—did not Our Lord Himself lay it down that to this we are to bend the *whole* of ourselves, mind, heart, soul, strength? And he had found that the practice of the presence of God was the surest and simplest—indeed, the infallible—way to develop that love. This practice he would not have to remain a merely mental one—as to remind ourselves that indubitably God *is* present in all things in the fullest and most comprehensive sense of the word—for faith tells us all this much. But experience teaches that such a belief does not become real to one, or an activating force in one's life, until one perceives and accepts the consequences of it to oneself, grasps it therefore by virtue of an act of practical attention, *apperceives* it as a philosopher would say.

So he says that we must at first "apply to Him with some diligence," meaning that we shall have to use a certain amount of force to bring God into all, even the least important,

of our occasions. He was pleased, he said, "when he could pick up a straw from the ground for the love of God," feeling that He could be as truly concerned in such a trifle as in any greater thing. It is, indeed, an impertinence to think of God as grading our actions by great or small according to our material standards of measurement. It is such a vulgarity as we blame upon those who, for instance, would judge the excellence of a picture by its size or of a musical passage by its volume. For God's infinity involves absolute independence of all limitation, all increase or decrease, by any cause outside Himself. His relation to us remains immutable though ours to Him varies with our interior conformity or recalcitrance to His will as it is translated by our conscience into terms fit for our apprehension. We may perhaps form some sort of idea of the grounds of God's appreciation of our actions if we think of it as *qualitative* rather than *quantitative*, so that the apostolic merit (for instance) of one to whom, through no fault of his own, opportunity of outwardly exercising his zeal for souls is denied, might be as great as that of a Francis Xavier. It was at the conclusion of His

hidden life at Nazareth, during which His whole activity had been confined to the simplest tasks of everyday routine, that Christ was proclaimed from Heaven by the voice of His Father as " My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased "—as one who had entirely satisfied the exaction of Infinite Perfection, of Him in whose sight the heavens are not pure. So that a main point of Brother Lawrence's reaction to the presence of God was his seeking, and always finding, Him in the least and most inconsiderable details of the day. And of this vivid sense of His unvarying nearness to him was born an equally vivid realization of God's care for him, of His understanding and acceptance of him, also in the least of matters. " We ought," he says, " to act with God in the greatest simplicity, speaking to Him frankly and plainly, imploring His assistance in our affairs just as they happen." He never felt that he had to ' apologise ' to God for the triviality of the offerings that were all that he had to make, nor to frame his sorrow for his faults in formal language or at length.

If he had some duty, great or small, to discharge, he went about it calmly and quietly

and without anxiety as to his success, saying to God, "that it was His business that he was about," and then proceeding with complete confidence that God would, one might almost say, 'take the will for the deed'! He did all his actions "with the desire to please Him by them, let what would come of it." Again, "He was very sensible of his faults but not discouraged by them: he confessed them to God and did not plead against Him to excuse them. When he had done this he peaceably resumed his usual practice of love and adoration." For of course this 'practice of the presence of God' is no other thing than the practice of the love of God. In proportion as we love a person (or a thing, for that matter) will be the extent to which he occupies our thoughts, influences our views and conduct, inspires our aims—in a word, is *present* to us. Conversely, in proportion as we deliberately keep any object before our mind, conform our choices to it, bring the consideration of it into debate upon the motives of our actions, in that proportion do we develop practical attachment to it. Much more true is this when that object is already one specially fitted for us and for which we are specially

fitted : one for which we are so made that our hearts are for ever restless until they rest in it. For the love of God, which to many seems so remote and puzzling a thing, is really the truest expression of ourselves : we are not 'whole' until the whole of our love is given to Him : our affections are missing their aim until they find Him. Hence, to be filled with the love of God is not to induce upon ourselves something out of the natural order, but to restore to us the true bent of our nature : not to form us into something that we are not, but to re-form us into something that we really are but from which, unhappily, we have become distorted. How valuable, therefore, will not any means be that we can adopt—however much effort it may at first require of us—which will certainly help us to this re-formation ? And Brother Lawrence is quite sure that in the practice of the presence of God we have such an infallible means. He is sure that by constantly reminding ourselves of this, taking pains over it and never losing heart because we often fail, we shall open the way for God to grant us speedily that intimate *sense* of Him which needs no longer any support from reason or imagina-

tion but becomes as native to our soul as the awareness of our own extension is to our physical consciousness. This then is the life of prayer : a life which *is* prayer because it is a life of increasing advertence, adhesion, surrender to God. " How can we pray to God," he says in a letter to a nun, " unless we are with Him ? How can we be with Him but by thinking of Him often ? How are we to think of Him often but by *forming* a holy habit of thought ? You will tell me that I am always saying the same thing : it is true, for this is the best and easiest method that I know, and as I use no other I advise the whole world to use it." In another letter written five years before his death he says, " I have quitted all forms of devotion and set prayers save those to which my state of life obliges me, and I make it my only business to persevere in His holy presence, wherein I keep myself by a simple attention and an absorbing passionate regard to God which I call an *actual* presence of God, or to speak better, a silent, secret, constant intercourse of my soul with Him."

To so great harmony and one-ing with God did he attain that nothing could break the

peace that derived from it. Assured, as he felt himself, of God's unbroken, all-embracing comprehension of him and acceptance of his intention to please Him only and in everything, nothing had the least power to disturb him. He did all his work for God, not with anxious 'renewals of intention,' but unaffectedly, in the security that He knew already and once and for all that it was for Him. If he committed any fault, he regretted it and asked pardon for it—and forgot it! Did not God know that he was human and therefore weak, but that in his heart he would rather cut off his right hand than offend Him? Prayer as a distinct and formal exercise had no meaning for him: with him, he said, "the set times of prayer were not different from any other times. He retired, indeed, to pray according to the direction of his Superior, but he did not want such retirement nor ask for it, because his greatest business did not divert him from God."

One is hardly surprised to learn that in some quarters there fell upon him the suspicion of Quietism. That subject was very much in men's minds in his day for it was the day of Molinos, Malaval, Lacombe, Mme.

Guyon and (if we must reckon him amongst them) of Fénelon. The sentiments attributed to him were that the alternatives of damnation or salvation did not trouble him, and that he only cared to love God for God's sake with no thought of reward or punishment: that his surrender of himself was so complete that he desired to hide his acts of love even from God to whom they were directed: that he did not concern himself with the practice of virtues: that he had no anxiety about his sins nor any element of fear in his spirituality. But apart from the extreme improbability of a humble Carmelite Brother having any contact with these persons or even of his having read any of their writings, the whole tenor of his life affords ample refutation of the charge. He was obedient, he was humble, he spoke constantly of God's mercy and his own deficiencies and weaknesses. "I beg you," he wrote to a priest, evidently in deprecation of some piece of flattery, "I beg you to reflect rather upon my great wretchedness, of which you are fully informed, than upon the great favours which God does me, all unworthy and ungrateful as I am": and again, to a nun, "I can assure you that

whatever pleasures I taste at the table of my King my sins, ever present to my mind, as well as the uncertainty of my pardon, torment me."

He was no Quietist, for if he ceaselessly preached trust and confidence in God and peace and liberty of soul in His love, he as urgently insisted on " toiling and searching," on " toiling without cease," on acts of adoration, of praise, of sacrifice, " not to be weary of doing little things for God," " to watch attentively over all our passions," and many other such topics wholly repugnant to that error. One must remember, anyhow, that when the mystic tries to render his experiences into the prose of ordinary thought he is in little better case than one who would interpret, let us say, music by mathematics or painting by chemistry, and that therefore it is likely that his words will be susceptible of many misunderstandings and misapplications.

What he did say, that we should all be able to understand, was that the whole of our business, and therefore the true end of all our endeavour, is to love God : and he has left us by word and example a very clear and reassuring doctrine of how best to help ourselves

to that desired consummation. He calls this 'The Practice of the Presence of God,' which he defines as "the schooling of the soul to find its joy in His divine companionship."

"We should apply ourselves," he says, "unceasingly to this one end, so to rule each of our actions that they may all be little acts of communion with God": and, "Let all our business be to know God: the deeper and wider our knowledge, the greater our love. Let us seek Him often by faith: He is within us, do not look for Him elsewhere."

ST. BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE

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BENEDICT JOSEPH LABRE was born in 1748, the eldest of fifteen children. His parents were prosperous farmers who also kept a sort of general store in the village of Amettes, near Boulogne-sur-Mer. He was intelligent and of a happy disposition, but from the very first he seemed to live aloof from the ordinary interests of his class and age and appeared never to be able to settle down to anything practical. His parents, impressed by his early piety, willingly designed him for the Church, and at the age of twelve sent him to his uncle, the Curé of Erin, to be educated with that intention. But though he commenced the study of Latin and other secular subjects with a good will, he could never keep his attention upon them for long but spent most of his time reading the lives of the saints and other spiritual books. In consequence he made very little serious progress in learning : not from lack of ability, still less from idleness or any other such moral defect, but from sheer helpless inability to interest

himself in anything that was not directly about God. For what was haunting him with growing insistence and distinctness was the desire of perfection, apprehended at first dimly and in an elementary fashion as a thing relating primarily to himself, but increasingly as something not to be received or attained but wholly to be *given*. So, at the age of sixteen or so, he conceived the idea of offering himself to the Trappists whose life appealed to him as the completest form of self-immolation that he could imagine. But the proposition could not be entertained for reasons of age and health, and after an interval he approached the Carthusians. Here he was finally accepted, but after two periods of trial as a postulant he was obliged to leave. Another attempt at the Cistercian life seemed to promise better, and for a time he was perfectly happy. But again there supervened what in any other person might justifiably have been called restlessness or instability, or perhaps eccentricity, and on the plea of inadequate health he was dismissed. Nothing daunted, and still questing, he left his home and country with the expressed intention of offering himself to one of the monasteries of severe observance which he had heard were to

be found in Italy, and with no other baggage or provision than the clothes upon his back and a satchel containing a few books, he entered, without at all knowing what he was doing, upon his true vocation, which was to prove the very reverse of what he had believed it to be. It was as if his intense desire to leave the world and all that it meant had been given to him in order that he might live the more perfectly *in* the world. His cell and cloister were to be the public highway and the thronged streets of Rome, where he was to live for years in a stark austerity beyond what De Rancé himself could have imagined. For it was to be a discipline not only of the body, which soon accustoms itself to almost any hardship, but of the mind too and the spirit, which begins afresh with every new day. Looking before him no further than just the next step, he walked as the Holy Spirit led him. He was to isolate himself from every human interest—one had almost written, from every human decency : he was to deaden his senses and stultify his intellect ; clothed in rotting and verminous rags (he was fastidious and natty by instinct), feeding upon garbage picked out of the refuse heaps on the pavement, denying himself the

most innocent curiosity about current affairs though all Europe was marching and countermarching around him, suffering acutely (as one cannot but believe) from the evident repulsion which he aroused among the devout in the churches where he prayed—" Don't take that place : the ' Poor Man ' was there this morning ! "—deliberately closing his mind to all temporal preoccupations and satisfactions, he must seem to ordinary commonsense judgement to have abused and degraded his nature instead of elevating it, to have wasted God's gifts and, as far as man can, to have defaced His image within him. For is it not true that all creation is God's utterance of Himself in every form of being from the lowest and simplest to the highest and most complex : His expression of Himself in the ascending scale of nature with ever more perfect distinctness and resemblance, and in man, the rational self-determining creature, more fully than in any other ? And if so, is it not our plain duty and vocation to co-operate, as it were, with Him by giving to our faculties and powers the fullest opportunity that our circumstances allow, cultivating, liberating, exercising them, lest we merit to be condemned with the wicked and

slothful servant who neglected to trade with the talents entrusted to him? Yet this man seems not simply to have held himself passive but to have offered positive resistance to the divine expression within himself: to have denied himself the use, in God's service, of the very means which had been given to him for no other purpose than that they should be used for it. For he did nothing, he said nothing, he wrote nothing that is remembered for any of the reasons that normally challenge remembrance: he failed in his home life and he failed in the career of his predilection: he was intelligent and had studied, but he let his knowledge slip away unheeded: he lived secluded from all interests, aloof from all movements, indifferent to all ideas: he never worked for his living nor even begged for it: if he could pick up from what others had thrown away a sufficiency for each day, he was content, and he was content if he could not. To all but a fraction of the world around him he was no more than a nameless vagrant who from depth to depth of misery and squalor was sinking to an inevitable death from neglect and starvation. Yet within an hour of just such a death, at the age of thirty-five, people were calling out

in the streets of Rome that 'The Saint is dead!'

He was beatified by Pius IX in 1859 and canonized by Leo XIII in 1881.

So he is a Saint—'holy,' a 'whole man'—a perfect utterance of Christ who lived in him.

For all the anomaly and the puzzle of his life—the 'scandal,' indeed, that it has been to not a few—we need not to look far into the principles of the Christian life for an explanation of it. That life is built upon a framework of precepts and counsels known to all, the application of which however is determined by an infinity of varying circumstances and conditions—age, nationality, sex, social grouping, upbringing, and more intimately, character, constitution, taste, talent and inherited instinct, with all their combinations and permutations. It is inevitable that in such a variety modification, with a consequent liability of fundamental alteration, will ensue; and that such results will not usually be in favour of a greater rigour or distinctness. Just as we expect superficial area to vary inversely with depth, or the diffusion of a force to be at the expense of its initial impulse, so shall we not be surprised to find that the extension of

these principles to a larger and less homogeneous world than that in which they were first revealed ever tends to lower the quality of the response and the vigour of the reaction with which they meet. There grow up, as the history of the Church shows us, a congenial smoothing and softening of what has come to seem harsh and too uncompromising, and a dilution of the Christian ideal with worldly and prudential elements—the more dangerous because they are so reasonable—which, if there were nothing to check them, would sooner or later re-edit the Gospel into something little more impressive than an acceptable code of morals or of civic behaviour. That ' check ' is supplied from time to time by just such a life as the one now under examination : the life, namely, of one who without compromise or any sort of reckoning with the opinion, experience, or example of anyone, puts into literal practice one of the fundamental principles of the Christian teaching. Such a life gives a shock to our complacency, it comes as a splash of chilly reality upon the warm comfort of our spiritual adjustments, it breaks like a raucous shout into the harmonies to which we have tuned the claims of the spirit and the flesh. It is not

remarkable that the result of individual and collective experience aggravated, so to speak, by the very honour that we pay to the exceptions—the saints—has been to establish mediocrity of spiritual attainment as the natural and normal level for the generality of Christians : nor is it remarkable (but then it becomes really pernicious) that in consequence the Christian ideal itself suffers a declension into mediocrity. Yet if we take Christ's words literally—and there is no indication in the Gospels that they should be taken otherwise—the exception should be the Christian who is *not* a saint ! At any rate we must be wrong if we take it the other way round however strong be the arguments that history affords in our favour : and is it not true that though we would not, perhaps, thus formulate our thoughts, we do, for the most part, act as though we believed not merely that the mass of Christians are in fact spiritually mediocre but (almost) that they ought to be ?

St. Benedict Joseph Labre was one of those saints who seem to have a special mission to emphasize, ruthlessly and uncompromisingly, as the times demand, one or other of the basic elements of Christian life which may have

fallen into neglect, or become distorted or misinterpreted, and for the good of the life of the Church be in need of practical definition and illustration.

The devil, Our Lord has said, is a liar and the father of lies, and the quarters from which proceed all the temptations that assail mankind are at his disposal and under his control tending, all of them, no matter what their nature, towards untruth, unreality, illusion. When, as St. Paul puts it, he 'transformeth himself into an angel of light,' it is always as a light that in the end leads astray, a light showing false colours and wrong shape, tilting truth towards untruth and the right and the good towards evil. Especially has his endeavour in all ages been to reverse the true incidence of importance in the issue between the things of the body and the things of the soul, and this has always been accomplished —now in one way, now in another, according as human conditions varied—by the gradual subordination, on half-a-hundred reasonable pleas, of the latter to the former.

Against this destructive tendency the life of Benedict Joseph Labre stands in violent protest. The only remedy for this usurpation

by the body of the hegemony of the human *compositum* with its virtual postponement of the supernatural to the natural, is the bold assertion of the indefeasible pre-eminence of the former. This assertion is made and has never ceased to be made by Christianity, but its teaching has (as a plain psychological necessity) needed the reinforcement of example, and this reinforcement—by example unequivocal, uncompromising, almost brutal in its literalness—he supplied. The theme of his teaching, not preached but lived, was that the supernatural is the only true life, in comparison with which all natural things are nothing as the husk is nothing in comparison of the grain or the dross in comparison of the fine ore that it conceals. It is thus, and not primarily as an example of voluntary poverty, or bodily mortification, or humility, or exalted prayer, that he serves the cause of Christianity as against the infiltration of the world. He illustrates in actual living shape that warning word of Christ, recorded by all four Evangelists but perhaps most pertinently by St. John, that "He that loveth his life shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal." He is not pro-

posed to us for our literal imitation—the poverty of Christ Himself, who had not where to lay His head, touched no such depths as his. His relation to the level of Christian practice on which we may, and should, follow Christ to perfection, is somewhat as that of pure virgin gold to the same precious metal made practicable for use. Unalloyed, while it still remains the standard of value for all that has the name of 'gold,' it is itself unfitted for any practical purpose: to be of service, were it only as an ornament, it must be mixed with something harder, coarser, and less precious than itself. For us, with our temporal duties and responsibilities, such a purity of abnegation, such a 'hatred' of 'life in this world,' would not profit but hinder us 'unto life eternal': but he, by his strange and unique vocation, was delivered from the claims to which the normal life of man must answer in order that thus free he might stand before us as the ideally perfect presentation, in isolation from all modifying influences, of the basic principle of life-value enounced by Christ, who uses the example of His servant to show us how we may test and estimate the sterling worth of our own coinage.

No doubt we shall, many of us, be puzzled —quite possibly repelled—by the crude realism of this man's philosophy, but we can hardly fail to be stimulated by it. He did not elect, or desire, this manner of life : he wanted to be a monk. His ideal was the retirement and discipline of the cloister, the regulated labour, the sacrament of the Vows. There is evidence that he was no less an offence and a burden to himself than the circumstances of his enforced vocation made him to others. He has been called weak-minded, or alternatively, a hypocrite. He must have been on the contrary, as his perseverance and consistency evidence, quite abnormally strong-minded with that strength which is better proved by patience and peace of spirit under depressing conditions than by vigour in the midst of activity.

Hypocrisy may easily be alleged of anyone, and it is difficult to disprove. But the hypocrite—the 'actor,' as the word radically signifies—plays his part for some definite profit, and by his course of life our saint stood from the first to win, and indeed until the end did win, nothing but further obloquy and disfavour. People were angered and scandalized by him, and let him see it very plainly. The

rare few whose spiritual discernment was equal to the problem were mostly persons whose opinion can have been of little importance to him one way or the other.

But the clearest disproof of both accusations is the unhesitating obedience which he rendered to legitimate authority. He was ordered to take up some work and earn a living for himself instead of trying to exist—like the birds, or the flowers of the field, for instance !—on the providence of God alone. At once he set himself to obey, but without the smallest success. So entirely detached was he from every created thing, so completely incapable of taking in his occupation even the minimum interest necessary for the most modest accomplishment, that in pity for his distress the command was revoked, and he was given free licence to proceed on what the kindliest of his well-wishers must secretly have considered his wasteful and shiftless way. Not even they would have said that he was a good citizen : and others, in our own day, may well find a difficulty in the veneration officially accorded to one whose life seems to interpret the precepts and counsels of the Gospel in terms so uneconomic, so improvi-

dent, so anti-social! Are vagrancy and idleness—not to say, uncleanliness—canonized in St. Benedict Joseph Labre? And, by implication, are industry and order and thrift and responsibility discredited? No: but what *is* canonized is heroic fidelity to an ideal even when, as in this man's case, such fidelity could only be paid for at such a price. There always has been, and in spite of the advance of civilization one fears that there always will be, a section of society living in just such destitution as his: of persons as completely detached, by the harsh force of their circumstances, from all human solace and resource as he was by the act of his own free will. Objectively, you may say, and without any acquiescence on their part, there is fulfilled in their lives what the Gospel lays down as the first condition for the perfect following of Christ, that one must leave all else—the fear of which merciless stripping has made many a soul turn sorrowfully away, 'Lest having Him I must have naught beside'! But he waited for no such necessity: he ran to meet it: under that special impulse of the Holy Spirit which here and there, at such times and in such places as the Divine Wisdom elects,

drives a man to follow after ' the foolishness of God which is wiser than men ' so that we others, even if with bewilderment, may catch with our own eyes a glimpse of the Realities as they are real to God—under that impulse he, of his own deliberate choice, being free and able to take any other course that he pleased, chose this, the way of integral surrender and abandonment, embracing rapturously all the dreadful consequences that must ensue.

The ideal was that phrased in the *Imitation of Christ :* ' Whatever is not God is nothing and must count for nothing,' and ' Unless a man be quit of all creatures he can never turn freely to things divine,' though well is the author aware that ' Seldom is there any man found so spiritual as to be stripped bare of all things.' *

The ideal had to be underscored thus heavily so as to startle and arrest our attention, to make us ask ourselves whether or not we really believe in it with more than a merely speculative belief and give to it more than an easy notional assent ?

* *Imitation of Christ*, Bk. III, Ch. 31, nn. 2 and 1 ; Bk. II, Ch. XI n. 4.

Christianity is not in the first place a code of moral or social behaviour or a directory of citizenship, far less an avenue of accommodation between our supernatural destiny and our natural circumstances. It is first and foremost, and from beginning to end, a School of Holiness, a Way of Perfection—'Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect,' 'If thou wilt be perfect . . . come, follow Me.' No doubt its acceptance will make of it all these further things too: but do we need any more evidence than our own day liberally affords to prove to ourselves that if it be denied this primary function it will not long be accepted in any other? The strange story of Benedict Joseph Labre thrusts upon our notice, unmitigated and unadorned, the governing principle of the perfect life after the teaching of Him who was the Way and the Truth and the Life: but it also serves to focus our vision of human life in its largest and most comprehensive sense and to correct the faulty perspective to which our eyes so easily accustom themselves.

THE HOLY MAN OF TOURS

One ought not to be surprised when one encounters examples of eminent sanctity in the clerical state or among religious (whose profession obliges them to aim at perfect charity by the observance of the Evangelical Counsels) or under conditions which are themselves somewhat out of the ordinary—as, for example, among persons whose lives contain much suffering or are passed in very retired surroundings. One feels that in all these and in similar categories of lives there are ready present, either by profession or by force of circumstances, elements at least favourable to the unworldliness and the spiritual outlook which are the groundwork of holiness. It is true that sanctity is always a surprising thing in the sense that it is not a very common matter of experience ; and that it is surprising, too, in the concrete because we have grown to think of it as so in the abstract. It is perhaps this common estimate that makes us expect to find in each certified example of it some extra-

ordinary and uncovenanted ingredients of nature and of grace; and the effect upon ourselves of this established prepossession is still more firmly and lastingly to rivet upon us (who are not sensible of anything of the sort) the conviction that we at least are inculpably excused from such an ambition.

No doubt it is true that eminent holiness does require, and is always accompanied by, extraordinary graces, but all the same we should know that every Christian, just because he *is* a Christian, is the beginning of a saint: that the saint is a truly authentic Christian because in him is realized the true ideal of Christianity: and that the actual rarity of sanctity is due to much the same reasons as explain why in other departments of life attainment of the ideal is always a rarity. There is a difference however, and the difference is this, that in material (as opposed to spiritual) life uncontrollable circumstances may absolutely bar such an attainment on the part of some individuals, whereas in the supernatural order the power of grace can be limited by no circumstances whatever nor be ineffective, against his will, for anyone. It is a theological maxim that grace will never be denied to him who does what lies in him, and

one is left with the conclusion that the greater part of Christians do *not* do what lies in them—this, even allowing that many of the hindrances to their doing so are rather the corporate responsibility of the race than the fault of the individual. Now and again, indeed, we come across evidence of a kind of inward premonition of their predestination to such a state on the part of certain saints, which in some cases was even vaguely realized in the unregenerate or at least pre-saintly period of their lives. Such cases, however, may be considered as really extraordinary, and perhaps be classed with those others of finished sanctity in the very young of which the Calendar of the Church contains not a few instances. In these latter it is legitimate to believe that the Holy Ghost purposes that we should have, as a kind of flawless specimen for our study, the spectacle of some special virtue—as innocence or obedience for example—unspoilt by any such diminishing or qualifying influences as might result from the struggle with temptation consequent upon maturity. One remembers the words of St. John the Apostle, that " the whole world is seated in iniquity."

It is true, too, that St. Francis de Sales has

said that sanctity is the greatest of all miracles : but one feels that his meaning is rather that as a revelation of the power and goodness of God the life of a saint, the establishment in a free creature of perfect oneness and harmony with the Divine, is far more expressive than any supersession of the mechanical order of nature. Human sanctity, in other words, is a greater and nobler thing than any miracle.

In the subject of the present Chapter we have an example of the highest holiness in circumstances which to most people would seem of all possible settings the least favourable to any such thing. He was a layman and a professional man, he was married, he was in the enjoyment of substantial independent means and lived in a well-appointed house of his own. It may perhaps be unreasonable, but one does find considerable difficulty in coupling the idea of heroism with these commonplace material conditions : such an extreme needs, one feels, something extreme, too, in either direction, to start from, and the current of a life like this seems too even-flowing ever to generate anything less ordered and balanced than itself. The realization, with this example before us, that none the less holiness of a very high

degree may be compatible with conditions so uninspiring, should help to broaden—perhaps usefully to correct—our conception of what holiness really is.

Leon Papin Dupont was known as 'The Holy Man of Tours' even in his lifetime. His friend and principal biographer, the Abbé Janvier, tells us that letters with that title for their sole superscription, or addressed simply 'The Thaumaturgus of Tours,' or 'He who cures people at Tours,' not infrequently arrived at the Post Office and were delivered to him as a matter of course.

He was born on January 24th, 1797, in the Island of Martinique (birthplace of the unhappy Empress Josephine Beauharnais), where his father owned a large sugar plantation. The island was at that date in British possession, but was restored to France in 1802 by the Peace of Amiens. At about the age of ten he was sent to school in the United States where he remained for two years before going to France to finish his education. It is pleasant to know that he spoke English and always took a keen interest in the religious movement in our country. His school days came to an end in 1815, and after a brief visit to his native island

he returned to Paris to study law, being provided with an ample allowance by his mother, who since the death of his father in 1803 had married again. He was, both by nature and by upbringing, genuinely religious. But he was of a gay and friendly disposition, handsome and clever and with charming manners, and though his morals appear always to have been above reproach he undoubtedly led for some time (with that reservation) a quite worldly life, and the practice of his religion dropped a good deal into the background. All the time, however, as he related in after years, he was conscious of a secret attachment to 'the better way,' and it needed only (what to his associates must have seemed a trifling matter) his discovery that through joining in some pleasure excursion he had missed Mass on Ascension Day, to change his whole manner of life right round. Deeply penitent for what he now regarded as his culpable carelessness he plunged at once into good works of many varied kinds, gave alms lavishly, radically cut down his style of living, joined a Sodality of young men which had been founded by Père Delpuits, an ex-Jesuit (the Society had been suppressed in 1773), and resumed his former habit of weekly Com-

munion. During this period, too, he formed a close acquaintance with St. Madeleine Sophie Barat, Foundress of the Society of the Sacred Heart.

A perhaps natural result of this ' conversion ' was that he now began to have thoughts of the Priesthood, and in fact took some steps towards securing admission to the Seminary of St. Sulpice. But he had finished his University course and taken his degree, he had not seen his mother for over six years, and an appointment had been offered him in the *Cour Royale* (Louis XVIII was now reigning in France) in Martinique. So he postponed his decision, and in 1821 (the year of the death of Napoleon) returned home. Six years later he married.

This, according to classic pattern, should have been the end, or at least the crystallization point, as it were, of his spiritual career, and there should be expected of him henceforth nothing more exalted than the admirable but sober excellence of a good Christian husband and father. But the chief point and value of the life of this remarkable man is precisely that in it is exhibited the spectacle not so much (as is common with the saints) of the *struggle*

between high ideals and commonplace conditions as of their *alliance*.

His married life, which was intensely happy, came to an end five years later, when his wife died very shortly after giving birth to a daughter. His biographers relate that so great was the grief of the bereaved husband that for a time his eyesight was seriously affected.

Two years after this, in 1834, M. Dupont, with his mother and daughter, left Martinique for good and came to Tours, where they settled at first near the Ursuline Convent which the child attended for her education, and finally in the Rue St. Etienne in a house which he bought and in which he lived until his death on March 18th, 1876, at the age of seventy-nine. Here began that life, so ordinary in appearance and so extraordinary in reality, which rightly deserved for him the title by which he is now known. He started, one might say, ready equipped for holiness. He was absolutely fearless both physically and morally, extremely simple in his views and outlook, and possessed of a power of faith which nothing could shake and no disappointment discourage. He seemed less to believe than to see and to know. At an early stage of his life at Tours he

had come across these words of St. Teresa : " I declare that I never began to comprehend the things of salvation until the day when I determined no longer to have any regard for my body," and he took this as a direct message to himself. He began at once to practise bodily mortifications such as wearing a hair-shirt, taking severe disciplines, and fasting rigidly at certain seasons of the year : but he felt that he interpreted these words most authentically by setting the spiritual side of life always and unequivocally first, and for him the supernatural soon became not merely appreciatively but in practical fact the almost visible and palpable reality of his daily consciousness.

As may be imagined, this habit of mind often led him into situations in which the average man would have found himself completely at a loss. A characteristic instance occurred one night while he was taking his share of duty as a member of the National Guard during the Revolution of 1848. He noticed a soldier lounging in a corner apart from the others and yawning with boredom. " Ah, my friend," he said, " I do not wonder that you are wearied—all this chatter, and

not a word about God ! " The man remained speechless with astonishment at the attribution to himself of such sentiments, while M. Dupont went happily on talking about the one subject that was near his heart with as little constraint as if he were in a convent parlour instead of a barrack-room.

This living faith and this matter-of-fact familiarity with the supernatural found their expression first in immense and tireless zeal for the worship of God, and then, most naturally, in the love of his neighbour. The society around him was indifferent when it was not actively hostile to religion. M. Dupont almost flaunted his Christianity in its face. No threat of opposition, no considerations of worldly prudence or human respect, made the smallest impression upon him. He became a daily communicant when such a practice was almost unheard of, and he urged others to do the same : and profoundly saddened by the widespread neglect of the Sacramental Presence in the many churches of the town, he instituted, as an act of reparation, the *œuvre* of the Nocturnal Adoration. His enthusiasm swept away all the hesitations of the clergy and the devout

laity, and in a very short time he had a body of men of all classes, including many working-men who came straight to it from their day's labour, gathered nightly in a room adjoining the chapel of the Lazarist Fathers and each taking an hour's watching before the Blessed Sacrament. He defrayed all expenses himself, and often while the others after their watch lay down to sleep on the camp-beds provided for them, he would remain in prayer in the chapel for several hours together.

He had the kind of faith that makes no discrimination of quality between big and little, between things hidden and things that attract attention. There are some perhaps who might think that he was credulous, and indeed that reproach was often brought against him in his lifetime, for he had nothing of the critical spirit, and his enthusiasm for pilgrimages to the numerous holy places that exist in France ('The Pilgrim' was his favourite name for himself) and his delight in medals, scapulars, and similar objects, were judged by many even of his friends to be excessive if not superstitious. But such persons found it difficult to maintain their attitude of disapproval in face of the startling

results of his devotion of which they were constantly the witnesses. Scores of authenticated instances are on record of cures wrought not only on human beings but on animals too and inanimate things, and of all kinds of material benefits procured or obstacles removed, by his use of the medal of St. Benedict for which he had a quite special preference. Whenever he went out he used to put a handful of these in his pocket and often came home again with it empty. He once said that if he thought there were a good enough reason for it he would, with one of these medals in his hand, engage to stop an express train in full career, and there is no doubt that he was quite serious. He did, in fact, with means quite as simple, again and again do things not much less extraordinary. It seemed that in him was fulfilled literally the promise made by Our Lord to those who have real faith ' and stagger not,' that they should move mountains and that ' nothing shall be impossible to you.' If he did not move a mountain, at least he threw down an obstructive stone wall, diverted a high-road, levelled an undesirable house to the ground, extinguished a conflagration, held up a flood, and over and over again,

with a blessed medal or a simple sign of the cross, stepped in to modify, remove, or reverse some natural or preternatural obstacle to the glory of God or the good of souls. Miracles were to him the most ordinary things in the world: he could never see why it should be more wonderful (he would probably have said, *less* wonderful) for a stone to rise into the air than for it to fall to the ground—is it not God that is the sole cause of either fact? He, at least, was never surprised: he frankly loved miracles, and he laughed heartily at every such manifestation of God's goodness and power that he witnessed. You will find him again in the Gospel, where Our Lord warns His disciples that unless they become as little children they shall not be of His kingdom: and is it not the most engaging feature of the child's world that therein nothing is extraordinary or impossible?

Doubt *hurt* him: he felt that it was a blasphemy. 'Ask,' says Our Lord, 'and you shall receive,' and he could not understand why everybody does not take the promise just as it stands. Once, in his Shrine of the Holy Face, a sick girl was carried in and set down before the little altar. She began to

pray aloud, "My God, if it be according to Thy divine will——" but M. Dupont stopped her: "That is not the way to ask," he said, "you show that you have not enough faith if you speak like that. Say, '*Cure me!*': you must *command* the good God." That was his own unwavering attitude, and perhaps it is not until we examine ours that we realize upon what a depth and rock-like strength of sheer faith his life was built.

It was, no doubt, the obverse of his limitless faith and hope in God and of his vivid apprehension of the spiritual world, that he had a most acute realization of the activity of the evil spirit. He resembled the Curé d'Ars in his peculiarly keen perception of the devil as the active individual agent of all the wickedness in the world, and also in the half angry and contemptuous, half humorous, way in which he spoke of him or addressed him: and, like the Curé, he experienced many revengeful and terrifying assaults from that quarter. For him, too, Satan was a person, malignant beyond utterance, evil, cruel and relentless, possessed of immense cunning, foresight, and resource, and unceasingly active in every detail of social and private life—yet

with it all a fool and unspeakably contemptible. He would certainly have had no patience with the modern inclination to substitute a psychological abstraction for an actual Fiend. He found the greatest satisfaction in imagining fresh terms of ridicule and opprobrium in which to express his loathing and contempt for the devil, and those of his friends who, knowing his innate refinement and the habitual courtesy and restraint of his speech, might have been scandalized by the reckless luxuriance of his abuse of 'the Old One,' as he often called him, remembered that it proceeded from the tremendous vigour of his faith which made him regard the enemy of God and man as altogether beyond the pale of any consideration whatsoever.

There was not a good work on foot in Tours in which M. Dupont was not prominently concerned. There were, to mention only a few, the Nocturnal Adoration, the Night-schools for adult working-people, Catechisms for children, food and clothing depots for the poor, and a system of regular visiting in the hospitals and prisons, in all of which he took an active part and many of which he had himself founded. He also associated himself

eagerly and effectively with the work of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and with that of the Sisters of Charity and the Little Sisters of the Poor.

But the outstanding feature of his life, to which now his memory is most closely annexed, was the Work of Reparation which centred round the Shrine of the Holy Face. Year by year the *cultus* grew and claimed his attention, until for the last sixteen years of his life it absorbed him altogether.

The idea of reparation, particularly for the sins of blasphemy and the profanation of the Sunday, had long engaged his attention. Both of these evils were very rife in the France of his day as a legacy of the Revolution of 1793, and from the very beginning of his settlement at Tours he had felt sure that he was called, in some way or other, to an apostolate of atonement.

In the year 1843 a young Carmelite nun, Sister Marie de St. Pierre, believed that she had received in prayer a divine commission to devote her life in a special way to the same object, and she spoke of it to M. Dupont who was a frequent visitor to the Carmel of Tours. He received the communication with eager

delight and at once set to work to promote the cause through an Association which arranged for novenas, visits to churches, processions, and other devotions directed to that end. It seemed to them both that the vices of blasphemy and swearing and of contempt for the sanctity of the Sunday, being an open outrage upon the reverence and worship due to God, were identified with the spittings and blows in the face which Our Lord had endured in the Court of Caiaphas, and it was as reparation offered to the Holy Face of Christ that their design at once took shape, though not for another eight years, in 1851, was the marvel-working shrine established which was to become the focus of the devotion for the whole of France. In that year the Prioress of the Carmelite convent made M. Dupont a present of a facsimile copy of the ' Veil of St. Veronica ' preserved at the Vatican, on which the face of Our Lord was believed to have been miraculously imprinted. He took the image home, and full of his idea of reparation, arranged an altar for it in his study, and as afterthought placed a small lamp—a wick floating in olive oil—before it. It matters not at all whether or not he was mistaken in

his acceptance of the 'Veil of Veronica' as an authentic relic of the Passion. That he believed it to be so seems certain: but even so its value to him was only as the material symbol of the sufferings of Our Lord under the neglect and insult and denial of those for whom He had given the uttermost pledge of love, His life.

A few days after the installation of the picture a lady came to see M. Dupont on business. She complained, incidentally, of long-standing pain in her eyes, and as he was busy at the moment and had to ask her to wait, he suggested that she should kneel down before the altar and pray to be cured of her affliction—on a sudden impulse he added, "And put a little oil from the lamp on your eyes." She did so, and after a short interval exclaimed joyfully that the pain had completely gone and that she was cured.

That was the beginning. Henceforth for the next fifteen or sixteen years there flowed an ever increasing stream of persons suffering from every imaginable ailment and deformity from cancer to clubfoot, through the sitting-room of the house in the Rue St. Etienne, and nearly everyone who prayed with faith and applied or

swallowed some of the oil, went away healed. The number and variety of certified cures is almost beyond belief. But they caused M. Dupont no surprise : what did astound him was when there was *no* cure, and in such cases he took trouble to ascertain the reason of the failure, tracing it always to weakness of faith. It is to be noted that he invariably insisted that the sufferer should go to confession and Communion at the first possible opportunity.

The story of the Shrine of the Holy Face takes one back to the apostolic age of the Church : even the contemporaneous pilgrimages of Ars do not surpass—perhaps do not equal—it in richness of wonder. And through it all the Holy Man of Tours sat smiling and imperturbable at his desk, welcoming his visitors with a gesture, methodically entering in a register the particulars of their cases, now and again interrupting a petition to make it more explicit or more confident, giving advice or admonition here or there in short expressive phrases. Nothing was further from his mind than to take any credit to himself for this outpouring of healing grace, and on his own share in the unbroken chain of miracle his only commentary was in the words of St. Paul

to the Corinthians, that the foolish and weak and base things of the world, the contemptible things and the things that are not, hath God chosen.

The pilgrimage and the miracles continued uninterruptedly until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war when normal life at Tours, as all over the country, was completely disorganized by the disasters that overtook the French arms. In 1871 the Prussians entered Tours and some of their troops were billeted on M. Dupont : and after the conclusion of the war, in the consequent conditions of revolution and social upheaval, the Shrine became almost deserted.

M. Dupont was now seventy-four years old. He had been chained to his desk beside the little altar of the Holy Face for over twenty years and his health had suffered badly. His fingers and all his limbs were cramped and knotted with arthritis, his sight was failing rapidly, paralysis was creeping over him, and to many other painful ailments was added the misery of perpetual sleeplessness. His daughter had died in 1849 and his mother eleven years later, and he was now alone and helpless but for the devotion of an old servant and a hand-

ful of loyal friends. Yet we learn that at no period of his life had he seemed gentler or more cheerful or the vigour of his faith been more evident. He had indeed lived his whole life on that one note—faith, fearless, unfailing faith : *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,* and *Although He should slay me yet will I trust in Him,* and *Yea, though I should walk in the midst of the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evils for Thou art with me.* He died, after receiving all the Sacraments of the Church, on March 18th, 1876.

Thirty years before he had paid a visit to Ars. When he arrived at the church the Curé was just leaving it, surrounded as usual by a packed throng of pilgrims. But he singled out M. Dupont at once, and making his way straight up to him stood for a moment looking him earnestly in the eyes, then raising his joined hands, " Ah, my friend," he said with a radiant smile, " how well it will be with us two when we find ourselves in heaven together singing the praises of God ! "

ST. CATHERINE OF GENOA

In the twelfth century there began a feud, destined to last for many generations and to undergo many confusing transformations, between the adherents of Hwelp (or Welf) Duke of Saxony and those of the Hohenstaufen of Waiblingen, over their conflicting claims to the Imperial throne. It was more complicated than that, but that was the gist of it. Later in the same century the quarrel resolved into one for supremacy between the Papacy, in the person of Alexander III, and the Empire, represented by Frederick I, the redoubtable Barbarossa. This recasting of the issue in dispute, with the consequent shifting of the main scene of its activities to Italy, led to a softening of these two barbaric-seeming names into forms better suited to southern tongues, and 'Hwelp' and 'Waiblingen' became 'Guelph' and 'Ghibelline,' the former being for the Pope and the latter for the Emperor. Later still both the original and the secondary causes of rivalry between the two parties

became almost entirely submerged in new matters of difference, and though mutual hostility remained as bitter as ever, the names Guelph and Ghibelline soon had even less authentic reference to their origins than, for example, the modern political distinctions of Conservative and Liberal in this country, or of Republican and Democrat in America, have to theirs, and were simply convenient names for the two largest and most active party factions among the many that distracted public life in the states of Italy during the Middle Ages.

To a noble Guelph family of Genoa, the Fieschi, which had numbered two Popes, Innocent IV and Hadrian V, amongst its members, there was born in the year 1447 a daughter, Catherine, known to us now as St. Catherine of Genoa. She was the youngest of three sons and two daughters. Her parents had the reputation of fervent Catholics and appear to have brought their children up strictly in the practice of their religion. Reliable contemporary evidence encourages us to believe that the attribution of extraordinary spiritual qualities to the saints in their childhood with which hagiographers are so often

lavish on *a priori* (one suspects) rather than on historical grounds, is at any rate justified in Catherine's case. It appears to be unquestioned that she had reached a high level of contemplative prayer by the time that she was twelve years old, and that in the midst of the luxury that surrounded her she contrived to lead a most austere and penitential life.

As one would expect, her thoughts turned early to the religious life, and at the age of thirteen she offered herself to the convent of Augustinian Canonesses in which her elder sister Limbania was already a novice. She was of course too young, and it is not surprising that the nuns would not receive her. Probably she intended to make a second attempt later on, but her family had other designs for her future. Her father had died this same year and her brother Giacomo now took his place as head of the house. About this time the rivalry between the Guelph and the Ghibelline factions in Genoa became acute and led to much civic disturbance. This was largely due to the fact that a new aristocracy of wealth had arisen in that state (as in other parts of Europe) and had ranged itself under one or the other standard with all the old bitterness even if with

little of the old reasons for it. As formerly the Fieschi and the Grimaldi on the Guelph side had led their party against the Ghibelline Spinolas and Dorias, so now the Fregosi took up the argument with the former against the Adorni on the latter, and Genovese order and prosperity threatened to break down altogether under their senseless bickerings. It was Louis XI of France, over-lord of the Republic, who saved the situation. He handed over his suzerainty to Francis Sforza Duke of Milan, a person who as an Italian was more acceptable in that position than a foreigner could be, so that when the Duke sent his forces to establish his authority under the Ghibelline Doria it was a Guelph Fieschi who threw open the city gates for their entry, and there ensued thereupon a general reconciliation which for a considerable time at least brought peace to the distracted State. It was in order to cement this new unity that Giacomo determined to marry his sister to Giuliano Adorna, son of one of the chiefs of that powerful house. Catherine was not consulted at all until after the date and place of the ceremony had been already fixed : but she had been brought up in the tradition of unquestioning obedience to family authority,

and there was no appeal. So on February 13th, 1463, she being then sixteen years old, the marriage, for which she felt the utmost repugnance, was celebrated. Ghibelline and Guelph were now man and wife—a triumph of politics in her brother's eyes, a thing little less than disastrous in hers.

It would be difficult to imagine a more ill-assorted pair. Allowing for a margin of exaggeration on the part of Catherine's biographers, it appears that Giuliano Adorna was indeed in character and habits almost the antithesis of his young wife. The best that can be said in his excuse is that he was a man of his time and traditions. He was quick-tempered and aggressive, a gambler, lax in his morals, passionately devoted to every sort of show and luxury, serious about nothing but the pursuit of pleasure and diversion. The retired and penitential tastes of Catherine were utterly unintelligible and most disagreeable to him, and he let pass no opportunity of ridiculing and annoying her. Her reaction was to retire still more into herself and to redouble her austerities, and she became so weak and emaciated in consequence that her family were seriously alarmed. Interiorly, too, all was darkness :

prayer, penance, good works, all seemed meaningless and worthless : God appeared to have abandoned her for ever, and faith was one ceaseless, desperate effort under which she seemed from instant to instant to be on the point of breaking down altogether. She tells us that this terrible state of unrelieved desolation lasted for five full years. What we should expect to hear next would be that thereafter, having been tried and proved to the limit of her endurance, there had then flooded into her soul such light and warmth and strength as could only be purchased at that price. It is, in our degree, by a similar reflection that through our own bleak intervals we keep our hope, however painfully, still alive. But the saints live on a heroic plan : with those whom God finds responsive to His call He has no reserves, no half-measures, one might almost say no pity. He sifts and searches and dredges their soul, goes near to losing them their mind, to breaking their heart. That 'conversio' which in all the adult saints is the essential preliminary to transforming love must be all-embracing, it must reach down to the ultimate depths of their volition, out to the furthest boundary of their possible experience. It must

be *lived*, and lived *out*, not merely understood and accepted, however willingly—*if thou wilt be perfect . . . all whatsoever thou hast!*

One understands then, after the first surprise of hearing that it happened, how Catherine passed from her searing purgatory of desolation *not* up and on to a settled level of peace and security, but rather downwards and backwards to beyond where she had so nobly begun so long ago. For the importunity of her family and friends, lending its weight to the strain already put upon her resistance, prevailed at length, and partly to free herself from their perpetual reproaches, partly to ease her own intolerable distress, partly (it may be) from some interior questioning as to the complete purity of her motives in the possibly too introverted life which she had been living, she began to emerge from her solitude, to take part in the social activities normal to her position, in a word, to re-enter the world which she had so resolutely and so long forsworn. Immediately she became the object of regard and attention on all sides. She was courted and sought after, drawn into every kind of gaiety and amusement, committed to all the thousand and one futilities that constitute the main occupation of

what is called Society. It is certain, however, that there never was any question of grave sin.

It is almost with awe that we learn that this, too, lasted for five years. It needed all that time for her to learn from that grim teacher, the experience of loss and failure and all-but despair, how God is all, how He has made us for Himself alone, how our hearts must for ever wander restless until they find their way to Him. She had to taste, too, the unavailing anguish of those who know that they have thrown a pearl of great price away—mystically to dip into the very blackness of the Pit. No less a defeat than this was, could have won her the victory in the end. For hardly had she taken the first step which, do what she might, *must* be followed by others in the same direction than she realized what she had done, and was doing, and might yet do. Her soul was filled with an agony of remorse that poisoned everything : night and day in her heart she accused herself of apostasy, and frantic with longing to find her way back she yet could see no light and no hope wherever she turned.

Five years : and then, on the feast of St. Benedict, going on an impulse to her sister's convent she sent for the chaplain of the nuns

and asked him to hear her confession. It demanded an immense effort to do this because she had no idea of how she was ever to extricate herself from her entanglements: but she determined fiercely that come what might she would open her mind without reserve to the priest and would blindly follow his guidance at no matter what cost. Hardly had she knelt down with this resolution formed than, as she relates, there seemed to strike upon her mind and heart and soul a ray, of fire rather than of light, conveying such an overmastering love of God and such a conviction of His transcendent goodness and her own sinfulness that everything else was wiped out of her consciousness and on the instant all doubt and fear left her for ever. She fell at once into an ecstasy, repeating over and over again the words, *Non piu mondo ! Non piu peccato !* ; 'No more world ! No more sin !'

She found it impossible to make her confession even when she had returned to her senses, but as soon as she could move hurried back to her home where she collected and immediately disposed of all her fashionable clothes and ornaments, afterwards shutting herself up alone in her room for several days. When she emerged from her retirement she made a general con-

fession of her whole life, and then without a moment's delay entered upon a course of prayer and penance which she maintained unmitigated by any circumstances whatever for the remaining thirty-seven years of her life. A year later there came to her an interior certitude of the forgiveness of all her sins and the acceptance by God of her atonement for them in full. From that moment to the day of her death she thought no more of them. Her conversion seems to have been as complete as it was instantaneous. She was never again subject to any fluctuations of faith or fervour, she never for an instant lost sight of the presence of God, and she was never again tempted through any of her senses.

There must have been much real good in her husband in spite of his disorderly behaviour, for we learn that he accepted the new state of things without demur and willingly agreed that thenceforth they should live together as brother and sister, and though for some time to come there did not appear any great change in his mode of life, yet within a few years we hear of his complete reformation and that as a member of the Third Order of St. Francis he joined with Catherine in the heroic works of mercy

among the poor and in the hospitals of the city to which she devoted herself until her death in 1510 at the age of sixty-three, he having predeceased her by thirteen years.

But, as so often happens with the saints—and indeed with other categories of remarkable persons—the real value of the life of St. Catherine of Genoa, her chiefest title to our gratitude, is to be found in what superficially at least might seem to have been almost a side-issue of it. For it is as the interpreter and apostle (really 'sent,' one feels) of the doctrine of Purgatory that she made her most permanent contribution to the spiritual life of the Church, and what we know of her own inner experience helps us to realize how fitted she was for that task. That experience had taught her as no other master could that in the germ of love for Himself which God has implanted in our nature resides all the potentiality of our perfection and our happiness : that if this be not cultivated nothing will grow in its place : that the wickedness of sin is wholly in this, that it is the negation of love. " Who are you ? ", she once asked of the evil spirit during an exorcism : " I am one," was the answer, " in whom there is no love."

She had learnt by dreadful and dismaying experiment that the love of God alone—not any other means or any other aims however noble in themselves—is able both to stimulate and to satisfy the yearning of the human heart, and that the worth of any act that a man can perform is no greater than the love of God of which it is the token. And she knew by the same experiment that our love of God is one thing with His love of us—His self-expression, as it were, in His own regard, through and as ourselves—so that not to love Him is in fact to deny Him, for it is to reject Him who *is* love. The words that two centuries before Margery Kempe of Lynn, in far-away England, had heard in her prayer, she would have understood and rejoiced to hear : " Not all your prayers and penances and good works mean so much to Me as that you should believe that I love you."

But the first necessity of love is for union, and union in its closest sense is in the harmony of wills : by every sin (which is essentially an act of discord) this harmony is interrupted and impaired and something more disastrous to the sinner and more dishonouring to God than any mere temporal evil has been done

and must be undone and made good either here or hereafter. The guilt of the sin is forgiven by repentance, but a shadow, a weakness, something of a wrong orientation, remains in the will that offended, and right love between the soul and God is to that degree inhibited. How difficult the circumstances of our present life make the process of recovery all must be aware, and indeed the Church seems in practice to assume the necessity of an after-life atonement for the generality of the saved. Here we see even the plainest truths but darkly, and the mere lapse of time may act as a kind of mental or moral anæsthetic: it is not until the day when that which is perfect is come and we know even as we are known, that we shall fully understand what our hearts were created to give and what they have in fact given or withheld. In the first indivisible instant of the soul's separation from the body all the guilt of venial sin is remitted by that supreme act of submission by which it surrenders itself to God. There is now no other possible object of the will but God, nothing has any power to draw it away, were it in the very slightest degree, from Him, for Himself. The

whole total of energy in the liberated soul is converted uniquely Godward : its entire being presses undeviatingly, unequivocally, solely and wholly to that Absolute Being in whom alone it has its own being : at last its constitutive instinct for blessedness in God only has broken free from the trammels of all other attraction. But though from outside itself there comes now to the soul no hindrance to its full and immediate possession of God, within itself it perceives that through no fault but its own there is still something that holds it agonisingly back. This is the aftermath of sin, the sediment left by the weaknesses, the bad dispositions, the wrong choices and tastes, which the soul has taken into itself in the repetition of sinful acts committed throughout its mortal life. There remains no guilt, no aversion from God, attached to it : the freedom of the soul is now such that no influence but good has power to touch it : it cleaves wholly indeed to God, but the *instrument* of its adhesion—through its own fault, through the effect of the accumulation of ill-uses to which it has been put in life—has, as it were, become 'unhandy.' One might fancy a craftsman unable to give full

expression to his perfect ideal because, though his own vision and skill are unimpaired, through his misuse of them his tools will not serve him as they should.

And as in life it seems to be the ineluctable law that we must pull down and build again what we have built wrong, and this with greater pain and labour than it would have cost us in the first place to build aright, so (the Saint seems to teach) we have in Purgatory to struggle through to God by somehow retracing towards Him the steps that in life we took away from Him: in some mystic way to relive our temporal past, not in detail but in respect of that essential quality in it which gave it a final character displeasing to God, the ill-use namely of our free will. That is the bare statement of what we call the 'punishment' of Purgatory: but she goes on to show how terrible the process is, and why. The torment of Purgatory, indeed, she declares to be less than that of Hell only in that the latter is without hope and is constituted in hate and aversion from God, whereas the former proceeds from love and drives the soul nearer to Him. Yet again, in another sense this very difference is a chief

cause of the intensity of the purgatorial suffering. For the soul, now exclusively turned to God, is aware that only through its own fault is its knowledge (which is possession), and with that its love, of Him still imperfect : and as with impetuous energy it bends and thrusts itself towards Him, so do the knowledge and the love increase in clarity and vehemence and so in consequence does the anguish of the still untranscended separation grow. Extremes meet : increasing joy multiplies the suffering, and the greater suffering leads to greater joy, so that it seems true to say that the pain of Purgatory is more intense the nearer the soul is to its deliverance. The process of approach to final union with God is through a transformation of all self-regard into that perfect charity which has no will but His, so that for the souls in Purgatory the reality of their suffering is not the pain that it causes themselves but the realization of the cause and meaning of that pain, their opposition to (or dis-harmony with) His will which to them, says the Saint, is so catastrophic a thing as to obliterate in their consciousness the very recollection, as such, whether in the gross or in detail, of their sins that brought it

about, well though they know their own responsibility for it. Yet with it all—and it would be wicked folly to treat its agonies lightly—the souls in Purgatory enjoy a happiness far surpassing our imagination. St. Catherine, indeed, does not hesitate to say that she can think of no greater joy than theirs except it be that of the Blessed in heaven. For with them all happiness is resolved into this one single thing, that God's will be perfectly done: and in their sufferings they see this being accomplished, and more and more perfectly, as the relics of their sins that hindered it are by His love burnt away from them. But it would be a mistake to limit the teaching of the Saint to the purgation to come after death. Her doctrine of Purgatory was also her doctrine of life. Here as there, she teaches, it is true that all our happiness stands upon the oneness of our will with God's: and here, too, for all the obscurity of our apprehension, we can by supernatural faith learn to judge the worth of all things by that unique standard. Sin, then, should be of all imaginable misfortunes the gravest, and repentance and forgiveness will not be the last of it. There will be needed reparation in kind,

deliberate reversal of the evil choice, positive goodwill in small things as in greater—to lay, as it were, even in advance, the stress of our emphasis on the one overruling aim of all in self-defence against the frailty of our unstable fancy.

It is from such a consideration of Purgatory, too, that we are helped to an understanding of how pain may be, and ought to be, the means both of self-expression and self-escape. For we are never so true to ourselves as when we are true to God, by committing ourselves, that is, wholly to Him. And the more completely we do this the greater is our pain that there is yet more to do, for by so much the more clearly do we come to understand how that if we are to have Him, He must have all.

MARIE-EUSTELLE HARPAIN

206 - Love - Hate but ignore ?
209 - What kind of a body of man ?
211 - What did he fear ?
218 - What is a contemplation ?
222 - What is the economy of the structure of the ego ?

194 - What is pain ?
[illegible]

196 - Test of a priest's zeal ?

CANONIZATION is the seal set by the Church, under the leading of the Holy Ghost, upon the lives of certain of that immense number who have, in all ages and under every kind of condition, taken literally the invitation of Christ to leave all and follow Him—who lived, now not they, but Christ lived in them. It is an authoritative pronouncement of the heroicity of their lives : that is, that they have practised virtue in a degree *conspicuously* above that of ordinary goodness, and this not on occasion only but with such consistency as might fairly be considered habitual. They are therefore held up for our encouragement, proposed to us as our models, are the objects of liturgical veneration. Thus God is glorified in His saints : they themselves receive, as it were, a temporal reward for their fidelity, which adds to the accidental happiness of their eternal life : the Church offers renewed justification of her attribute of holiness : her members are instructed and fortified by yet

another example : in virtue of our solidarity one with another we are the holier and the more pleasing to God—our common ' spiritual level ' is raised—, the Christ-life is illustrated in further variety, and the divine sanction is given to yet one more practical response to the universal vocation to perfection.

But a saint is a man before he is a saint, and there is just a danger (rather increased by the influence of a certain school of hagiology) that this fundamental truth may be ignored and the saints be regarded almost as a separate creation, as scarcely more than honorary members of the community to which we belong. It is no matter for wonder that we do not look upon them as practicable models for our imitation or venture to institute any serious comparison between them and ourselves when we are never allowed to hear of their failing or being mistaken or unwise or wrong—in other words, of their being human as we ourselves are. But when we realize that they were faced with the very difficulties and temptations and wrestlings and agonies that confront ourselves, and that they dealt with these just as we do, only more bravely and with a greater constancy and a more

steadfast hope, we feel that at however great a distance we still may dare to equate ourselves with them. As a well-known spiritual writer has said, a shepherd should go ahead of his sheep but not a mile ahead : and the saints will be out of our reach by as much as their lives are out of our own experience.

For this reason it is easier, perhaps, to profit and be aroused and stimulated by the lives of what (without venturing to anticipate the judgement of the Church) we may call the 'unofficial' saints, than by those who are already elevated to our altars. Still more at ease shall we find ourselves with those among them whose lives being ordinary, humble, confined to a limited field of opportunity, should help to dissipate the common delusion that a saint is, in the spiritual order, what a genius is in the natural, or that he is the specially favoured creature of his special circumstances. More readily, it may be, with such examples before our eyes, shall we make our own the question that St. Augustine in the crisis of his conversion put to himself, *Tu non poteris quod isti et istae ?* It is a further encouragement if in addition such lives exhibit some strongly marked orientation—

are canalized in some clearly defined direction, concentrated principally upon one familiar point of devotion. A universal perfection dazzles and confuses us : the symphony is incoherent to our ears until we are able to seize the *leit-motiv* of which it is the utterance and the unfolding.

The life of the subject of the present study fulfils both these conditions. It was short—less than thirty years : on the material side it was cramped into the petty circle of an obscure village and passed in unremitting and barely remunerative labour : and spiritually it centred entirely round devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

Marie-Eustelle Harpain was born on April 19th, 1814, at St. Pallais, near the ancient Roman town of Saintes in the Department of Charente-Inférieure. Napoleon had abdicated just a fortnight before, and Paris was in the hands of the Allies. At Écully, on the other side of France, the Curé d'Ars, not yet a priest, was still struggling desperately with his theological studies, and he was to survive her by twenty-eight years. Pope Pius VII was back in the Vatican, and four months later was to restore the suppressed Society of

Jesus. In England George Stephenson had just built his first locomotive engine, and all over the world the old order was breaking up with accelerating pace before the tremendous onrush of invention and discovery which was to make of the nineteenth century the most revolutionary in the history of civilization. Nothing of all this touched the life of Marie-Eustelle at any point, but the record of it serves to give us her ' co-ordinates,' as it were, and to furnish us with yet another inducement to give her our sympathetic attention, for it removes her out of that vague undated age to which, at least subconsciously, we tend to allocate all the saints and brings her for all practical purposes into the very workaday world that we ourselves inhabit. Many of us must have known plenty of persons whose lives, in point of date, overlapped hers. Her parents were working-people and very poor. Her early days were in no way more remarkable than those of her neighbours : food was coarse and not always sufficient, and the cottage in which the Harpain family of father, mother, and five or six children lived, contained only three rooms. But in those days, no doubt, when the country had been drained

almost to its uttermost capacity by the ever-recurring necessities of the Napoleonic wars, the conditions under which the working classes had to live were uniformly miserable.

Her education came to an end in her tenth year: probably she had learnt little more than to read and write and answer the Catechism, but though there is nothing that we know of her to make us suppose that she was any better gifted than the average child of her class, competent authorities have pronounced the writings which she left (mostly letters, or accounts of her spiritual states written for her confessors) to be of quite notable literary merit. This probably indicates that, as we should have supposed, she was thoughtful and unaffected by nature—and had read very little!

At the age of fourteen she was apprenticed to a dressmaker, but before she went to work her mother (who seems to have been a good religious woman) insisted that she should make her First Communion. This she did in her thirteenth year on the Feast of Corpus Christi, receiving at the same time the Sacrament of Confirmation, as was the custom at that date.

It is interesting, and most instructive, to study, played out on this tiny stage, the drama of 'conversion' through which, as it seems, all the saints have at one time or other had to pass. On whatever the scale, the vital Election is in essence the same for all—first the Vision, obscure, crude, it may be almost absurd in apprehension, but (though the soul may not be aware of this at the time) with a substance of forceful reality under the accidents that give it form—shape, texture, and colour—which differentiates it integrally from a transitory day-dream and (again, perhaps, undetected by the soul) appeals direct to the inner, higher, will that lies behind and independent of all sensitive desire. There follows on this a realization that the Vision is a Call and a certainty that the Call is meant to be, and *can* be, accepted, and that if it be accepted the promise that it implies will without fail be implemented. 'Conversion' is the acceptance of the Call, and if it be genuine it is final, for (to put it that way) if it be genuine it binds not only the soul that makes it but God, too, Who asks it.

The drama begins when the first freshness and glamour of the Vision pales and there is

left only the painful, though still urgent, remembrance of the choice to combat with the legion of dreads, doubts, and counter attractions, the bad example and (from another angle of attack) the *good* example, that dispute it. As in the normal course of prayer from the lower to the higher forms the sense of comfort, well-being, finality, that accompanied the fervour of the earlier stages surrenders to one of desolation, darkness, and emptiness which yet, as we suffer under it, assures us inwardly that all is well—is better, is best—and that God is nearer to our awareness in the dark night of faith than ever the light of reasoning or imagination could make Him, so the saint, seeming to himself to waver and to turn back, knows as surely within the inmost of his heart that this will never be. His labour and suffering and fear are none the less for that, perhaps indeed the greater, because he sees by so much the more clearly the grandeur of his vocation and the depths of his own insufficiency for it.

There is evidence that at the time of her First Communion Marie-Eustelle was sensible of just such a call ; that childish as no doubt her apprehension and her acceptance of it must have been, the thing was real : and that

she understood that all that she was to give and all that was to come to her was to be through the Blessed Sacrament.

Thereafter came the inevitable reaction. She was attractive both in looks and in manner and her natural disposition was gay and friendly. Almost the only social recreation at St. Pallais was dancing, and she loved it. No harm in that, of course : yet she felt somehow as if there were, and her enjoyment was always a little spoilt by the obscure uneasiness to which it gave rise. Another child—she was only fifteen when she made her decision—would soon have lived the scruple down. But, tempered to her insignificance, there pressed upon her soul just the same imperious summons that every saint has heard and obeyed to leave all, be that much or little, for the All. For her the way was clear : the Blessed Sacrament could not be to her what already she knew it was to be if only a fraction of herself was given to anything else, so she turned away absolutely, finally and deliberately, from everything else, without distinction or reserve. Of all human vocations only the saint's will tolerate no division or sharing with any other interest.

So for the thirteen years that remained to

her she lived, almost literally, with the Blessed Sacrament. She scarcely thought or spoke of anything else, and when, five years before her death, she was appointed sacristan of the village church, she spent every hour that she could spare of the day, and often whole nights, before It. When she was alone in the church she would hug the Tabernacle in her arms and kiss its door. She dreamt one night that she was a priest, and her awakening was a bitter grief to her all the day after. But this was no idle luxury of devotion. She had passed her apprenticeship as a sempstress and had set up a business of her own with younger girls under her, and she had to work hard to make ends meet. She shirked no responsibility and she was always at the service of anyone who needed her, but more and more the Sacramental Presence upon the Altar drew her and absorbed her until it became less the object of her life than her very life itself. She knew it for the physical sign of Christ's risen life amongst us by which we too are risen. Into this secret life she felt herself visibly introduced through her Communions—*Except you eat the flesh of the son of man and drink his blood you shall not have life in you. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood*

hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. It is a secret life, because while outwardly we still have our place to fill in the world and all its dangers to face and all its troubles to endure, inwardly we live no longer our own lives but His, impassible, unassailable, assured of victory, while we retain it. For as Christ lives now upon our altars the triumphant life of His resurrection, still bound indeed, as it seems, by the limits of matter yet in reality for ever beyond reach of the accidents of nature and all the malice of man, so the soul while it shares that life passes unscathed through the world of spiritual evils that surround it and is free and unconstrained among all its necessities and commitments.

This is the guarantee that all those have who "eat and drink worthily": how faithfully will it not be fulfilled in one for whom, as for Marie-Eustelle, that Banquet is never at an end? She was always making her Communion: not only in the morning at Mass, but all the succeeding day through: always drawing in that supernatural life of union with God, the Christ-life, of which the Consecrated Host is both the symbol and the reality. And this, as we should expect, had its repercussion in every

detail of her daily life. Poor enough by force of circumstances, she yet denied herself in addition every small gratification that came her way, and to the inevitable austerity of her lot added many ingenious practices of penance besides, not aimlessly or in imitation of anyone, but because she knew that that detachment from creatures which is demanded by the truest attachment to God can only be achieved by positive action against their natural attraction, even of the most innocent. Her pattern, again, was the *Jésus Hostie* to Whom she had entirely consecrated herself, Who in His Sacramental Presence represents the uttermost limit to which self-stripping can go—' all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ' within a circle of Bread.

Her neighbours were quite content to let her go her own way so long as they saw in her only a good, pious, dutiful and hard working girl : but as soon as it became evident to even the least observant of them that she was much more than that, there began to arise against her that strange hostility which idealism, and especially in the spiritual order, seems always to develop in mediocrity. Prominent among those who resented her devotion, her frequent

Communions, her mortified ways, was an aged secularized nun—a relic of the Revolutionary suppressions—who worked herself into angry indignation over such presumption in a mere lay-person and so stirred up public opinion against her that for a time she could not appear in the streets without being abused and even stoned. One constantly meets, in the lives of the Saints, with just such instances of senseless persecution, even on the part of otherwise reasonable persons. One feels that it can only proceed from the 'Accuser of the Brethren,' playing (as he knows how) upon the vagrant emotions of inferior souls in his desperation to arrest by any means the holiness whose growth he foresees.

The parish priest too found, good man, that she was taking him quite out of his depth, and it seemed obvious to him and to many others that her proper place was in a convent. Marie-Eustelle was quite sure that they were wrong : but she wished to be helpless as the Host, to be lifted up and set down wherever authority pleased : so to La Rochelle she went under obedience, and there was received into the novitiate of the Sisters of *Notre Dame de Charité du Refuge*, a congregation founded in the seven-

teenth century by S. John Eudes for the care of penitent women and troublesome girls. The life was exacting, but much less so than the one that she had already made for herself. It was simply that it was not for her : and she was back again in her home within a fortnight. Her vocation, as it seems to us now, was not to sanctify herself in the seclusion and with the special spiritual aids of religious life, but rather to do so in the world where to so many, even of those who believe, the Blessed Sacrament means in fact so little, and by the argument of a perfect life centred in It to reawaken fervour and understanding.

She founded no religious order, but after her death a ' Society of the Handmaids of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament ' was instituted in her name, as it were, and in perpetuation of her spirit. The mother-house is in Toulouse. A section of the religious are formed into a permanent community, but the majority live, in imitation of their spiritual foundress, under rule in the world, devoting themselves very specially to the care of churches, to charitable works, and to the spread and practice of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

If, as it is permitted to us to hope, the

eminent sanctity of Marie-Eustelle be one day officially certified by the voice of authority (her cause was introduced in 1921), the appeal of her holy life will naturally reach a wider circle than at present. Meanwhile there is no doubt that it has already been a revelation and a spring of new faith and high endeavour to very many in her own country and abroad.

Her Eucharistic plan of life was simple. She applied to herself—formed herself upon them—all the implications of that supreme Mystery of the Faith. She aimed to be hidden, ordinary, trivial to outward seeming as the sacred species are : to be at everyone's service, offering her charity without stint but forcing it upon no one, as Our Divine Lord offers the whole of God's Love to whomsoever will take it, all day, from all the Tabernacles in the world : to welcome misunderstanding, derision, and neglect as things bringing her nearer in resemblance to the humiliations of the Sacramental Presence, solitary in so many closed or empty churches : to be one with God, living more and more intensely in unbroken prayer and recollection the sacramental Christ-life in which God and man are one : and all the time, no matter what has happened, good or bad, or

yet may happen, to be, in the realization of His protecting love, wholly at peace with a peace that passes understanding, a peace such as the world can neither give nor take away.

" Last Sunday after Communion," she wrote to Père Briand, her confessor, not long before her death, " I rested for two hours like S. John upon my Lord's breast. Suddenly I felt myself transformed in Our Lord so that I no longer saw or was aware of myself. Never before had I felt anything like this : the adorable Humanity of Jesus absorbed my whole being : I no longer live : it is Jesus who lives in me."

She died on June 29th, 1842, and her last words, spoken with suddenly outflung arms as if she hung upon the Cross, were Our Lord's own : " Into thy hands, my God, I commend my spirit."

ST. TERESA OF LISIEUX

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THE story of St. Teresa of Lisieux must be almost unique in the history of the saints. She was not quite twenty-five years old when she died, on September 30th, 1897, having been a nun for just over nine years, and many who when she was born were already older than she was to be when she died, lived to see her name enrolled among the saints. Indeed, her whole history from her birth to her canonization lies well within the lifetime of countless persons now living who would by no means willingly consider themselves old. This, remembering the traditional slowness of the Church in according her official recognition to the heroic sanctity of any individual, would have been remarkable enough had the stage of Teresa's life been set in public view: had she been a path-breaker in some region of active spiritual or social work: or had she been a martyr, an apostle or a foundress. But her life, as to three-fifths of it, was spent entirely within the narrow shelter of a pro-

vincial home of the *petite bourgeoisie*, and as to the remainder, in the virtual obliteration of a Carmelite cloister. Still more remarkable in these circumstances is the fact that canonization may verily be said to have been conferred upon her by public acclamation even before the Church had set her seal to it. This inversion of the accustomed order of things has happened before, but then the subject of it has always been (as we should expect) one who in lifetime had already taken the public eye—one need go no further back for an example than to the Curé d'Ars or to St. Benedict Joseph Labre. But to her public, the little world of Lisieux, she was only known (and no doubt very soon forgotten) as the youngest of the five daughters of M. Martin the watch-maker, whose well-known piety seemed to have destined all his children to the religious life : while in Carmel she was known just as the third of those children to enter the one convent, and probably to most of the nuns as, on the whole, the least distinguished of the three. In the very year of her death, when all the community knew that she was dying, she herself (with what satisfaction, one may imagine !) overheard one lay-sister say

to another, "What *will* our Mother find to say about Sister Teresa when she dies!" alluding to the Carmelite custom of sending brief appreciations of their deceased sisters to other communities of their Order. In fact, when the time came, the Prioress wrote nothing, or next to nothing. Instead, she printed and distributed Teresa's own account of her life, written at the command of her sister Pauline (Sister Agnes of Jesus) who had held the office of Prioress between two periods of Mother Gonzaga's rule. In this enchanting document, written in obvious if unconscious, but finally triumphant, struggle with the traditional 'common form' of such *journaux intimes*, is revealed the secret of that 'Little Way' which has been by far the most important contribution to the spiritual science of our generation. The greater part of the *Récit d'une Âme* is autobiographical, and the 'Secret' is rather implied by the course of her story than explicitly defined as a method of perfection. But in the last chapter, added by special request of Pauline some time after the rest had been completed, Teresa lays bare without reserve the lines upon which she had ordered her life of heroic love and sacrifice.

The theme is simple : it is abandonment of self into the hands of God, no new doctrine : yes, but an abandonment so thorough, so detailed, so consistent, so deep-reaching as to involve the smallest units of her volitional activity. Indeed, it is at its purest and sublimest in just those least observable matters wherein fidelity and resignation to the all-pervading, all-controlling will of God has least external repercussion either upon the notice of others or upon the consciousness of the soul itself. It is the way of absolute giving, without limit or respite or reserve : a heroism of self-surrender commensurate with the very greatest occasions for it that could arise, and not in the least degree diminished in splendour because in fact no such occasions ever did arise. It is the *Little* Way because it lies always among little things, but in her it was of that quality which would have been adequate to the dizziest height and the fiercest strain.

Looked at from another point of view, it might be called the Way of Perfect Acceptance. Everything, were it the tiniest trifle, was of God and from God directly for her. She accepted *everything*, without difference or

distinction, as a holy thing, taking it reverently and delicately from His fingers into the centre of her heart. The size or importance of the thing mattered to her not at all: she knew nothing of any 'big' or 'little,' for the sufficing and inestimable worth of everything that she had to do or to be or to endure was that all of it, greatest or least, first or last, was His Will, His personal Will for her. It was nothing less than Divine Wisdom itself that taught her how far more complete a sacrifice in God's eyes is the acceptance, as direct from Him, of little troublesome teasing things, so easily avoided, than the offering of something perhaps much bigger to look at but chosen by oneself—"Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire . . . in the head of the book it is written of me that I should do thy will."

The more one studies Teresa of Lisieux, whether in the records of those who knew her or in her own copious self-revelations, the more one realizes the profundity of their error who, misled no doubt by the simplicity and joyousness of the image thus evoked (powerfully aided by the insipid and conventionalized portraits of her now so much in

vogue) think of her principally as something bright and pretty and facile like the pictures which she used to paint for festal occasions in the convent. Her 'Little Way' becomes, so regarded, but a petty way after all: and she herself no more than a highly privileged child miraculously preserved from those struggles and agonies which one had been led to believe were of the essence of the life of sanctity. Devotion to the 'Little Flower' (how one comes to dislike the title!) has been, to many such, a mere outlet for sentimentality and an argument for release from the uncomfortable implications of Christ's own warning that the way of perfection is hard and narrow and that consequently they are few who persevere therein. But no mistake could be more capital. The lesson of her life is actually the exact opposite of this. What it teaches—in words of one syllable, so to say—is that holiness is an achievement that costs one the full of one's resources of strength and courage. It is a goal to which there is no short cut, a Temple to which there is no back entrance. To it there is but one way, His Who said of Himself, "I am the Way": it is the way of self-renunciation, of burden-carrying and yoke-

bearing, a way stretching for most of its length through darkness and the desert with no other star to guide one than the far-distant light of faith. Holiness is the expression of the love of God possessing and actuating the soul throughout all its being, and the love of God is, as all true love is, realized in progressive self-giving. Love, whether of God or of the creature, is one and the self-same thing and it is expressed in one and the self-same way : but the foundations of the two differ in this, that the latter is born of the knowledge of an object similar to ourselves, ascertainable through the reason and the senses, whereas the former, being directed to the ineffable Being of God, needs besides this an infusion of supernatural grace transcending the scope of these faculties as its term transcends theirs, and proceeding, when the subject is fit to receive it, from the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Love, who utters God's own immortal Love through us as our own. But in order to become such a channel of the Divine operation the soul has to make itself ready for it by doing all that can be done to that end in its own order. Little enough, indeed, but at the expenditure, none the less, of its whole substance—" If thou wilt

be perfect go sell all whatever thou hast." This giving (for, after all, what have we to give?) comes in the end, by an apparent paradox, to *receiving*, for the act of entire renunciation of all right of ownership whatsoever is the obverse of an entire acceptance of everything as of God and from Him, involving a voluntary and detailed recognition of Him and His gift in every happening of life down to the most inconsiderable. Does one not realize what such an unbroken chain of acts of surrender as this will imply, and how in consequence her life, which was spent in forging and welding just such a chain, should have worn itself out in so short a space?

Her 'Little Way,' just because it meant the unremitting and minute implementing of this surrender in each and all of the little things that fill up the immensely greater portion of our lives, was in fact a Way of unlimited breadth and content: it meant not the fruit and the flower only, but the stock and the root too—the root first, and then of necessity all the rest with it. One understands how to one bent as Teresa was on missing no opportunity of giving wholly whatever her hand

found to give, such trifling irritations as the splashings of a too vigorous sister at the wash-tub or the bead-rattling of a restless neighbour in Choir, were quite fit vehicles for that heroic abnegation which had the occasion been greater she would have practised no less whole-heartedly. She could put *all* her holocaust of self into patient ministrations to a querulous invalid or smiling graciousness to a naturally antipathetic sister, and she could accept the exchange of a gracefully shaped and coloured water-jug in her cell for an ugly cracked one, or bear without seeking relief the heat and dust and discomfort of household work in the summertime, or grievously chapped and chilblained fingers in the winter, with no less heroism than she would (as, in fact, at the end she did) accept agonies of pain and exhaustion.

Perhaps the chief difference between Teresa and most other saints was that she did not ask for or *want* greater occasions of suffering or self-surrender : they were not in her way, and she knew well that they would have drawn no more exactingly upon her will than did these lesser ones that came to her unasked. Thus, though she practised the regular cor-

poral austerities of Rule with exactness, she never spontaneously added anything of the kind to what was already prescribed. Though no doubt she was well aware that such things may easily be made into an excuse for escape from bearing with the unsought disagreeables that offer themselves so readily in the course of ordinary convent life (and perhaps had had to recognize that those who did much in this way were not invariably the persons that she revered most), one feels that her real reason was her knowledge that to her they would afford no wider scope for the spirit of surrender and acceptance that animated her than did the humble-seeming opportunities of which she availed herself so greedily.

It might be, and indeed has been, urged in depreciation of the value of her 'Little Way' for any but exceptional souls, that Teresa had been, so to speak, in a Noviciate from her earliest days. Both her parents were persons of very saintly life, and their family of five girls (two sons and two daughters had died in infancy) was brought up in a singularly religious, almost conventual, atmosphere and sheltered with the utmost solicitude from all contact with dangerous worldly influences.

She, in addition, was the object of adoring love on the part of a father whose dearest hope was that she might one day become a real saint, and who early initiated her in the life of good works and recollection. Yet on the other hand, the intense and unbroken happiness of her home life might just as well have proved an obstacle to her renunciation of the world, which nevertheless she made at the unusually early age of fifteen. But, in fact, whatever may have been her privileges by nature or by grace, so far from detracting from the value to us of the lesson that her manner of life affords, they were the very reason why we can read and learn that lesson so easily and feel its truth and attraction so strongly. God so fitted her, and so disposed her circumstances, that the secret of her holiness could not be missed. The lives of the saints are offered to us for our study in order that we may see therein at their finest and best the virtues, qualities, and motives that made them what they were. We are not called upon to imitate them in the personal details of their several lives, but to adapt to our own lives what theirs teach us. It is no favouritism (so to call it !) on God's part,

far less any injustice to us but quite the contrary, that here and there He so endows a saint by nature or enriches him by grace that he is able to present to us an unflawed example of this or that Christian excellence to serve us for an ideal. The lives of some saints offer us the spectacle, in their most highly developed and therefore most authentic and intelligible form, of one or another of the virtues that should be the aim of all of us : others exhibit the perfect practical exercise of general spiritual principles in varying circumstances. The life of St. Teresa of Lisieux is one of those which from time to time, as the world needs it, present a fundamental scheme of readjustment or reinterpretation of our attitude towards God particularly in regard of the pursuit of holiness, opening for us a fresh vista of the Way of Perfection.

It is the same journey to the same City, but with a new map to travel by.

THE ABBÉ HUVELIN

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THE Abbé Huvelin was born in Paris in 1838, and after completing his ecclesiastical studies was ordained in Rome in 1867. After his return to Paris he was attached first to the church of St. Eugène where he remained for seven years, and then to that of St. Augustin until his death in 1910. That is all that there is to be said about his life from the point of view of a career. He received no ecclesiastical preferment (unless one is to reckon an honorary canonry as such), he founded nothing, controlled nothing, wrote nothing, took no part in public affairs civil or religious. Yet as we make his acquaintance through the memories of those who knew him, or in the volumes in which reports of his conferences and familiar discourses, taken down by certain of his hearers, have been published, we are conscious of being in contact with a notable spiritual force and a soul of surpassing holiness—' rich, deep, cultivated, above all heroic,' as his friend and disciple Baron Friedrich von

Hügel has said—and we are certain that in the Divine economy of which in this life we have so little understanding he answered to a definite and sublime vocation. There is no such thing as spiritual waste : the energy of true holiness is never dissipated or lost : for the whole purpose of creation is the glory of God, and nowhere is that so perfectly rendered as in the human soul whether it be manifest to all the world or known to God alone. If we are to understand the phenomenon of sanctity we must first free our minds from the prepossessions to which from our natural habit of judging (as we say) by results they are inevitably liable and which lead us to estimate it by its importance rather to man than to God. Yet we are justified in expecting that precisely because the glory of God *is* the whole purpose of creation, where that is fulfilled it should in point of fact radiate from each creature to each other, and indeed one racks one's memory in vain for an example of an absolutely self-contained saint.

The life of the Abbé Huvelin is no exception. He is not nearly as well known to the world in general as he should be and as one hopes that in time he will be, and that is

very much to be regretted : but many of his contacts were with persons who in one way or another have had much influence on Catholic life in modern times, and in any case there he is with all his noble wisdom and inspiring example to illuminate and hearten us if we will be at the trouble of taking notice of him.

Regarded from the point of view of material achievement his life might well seem insignificant, as indeed might the life of many a saint : but even on the external side it was remarkable. He had not been long at his first church before he was recognized as an incomparable director of souls and a preacher of striking insight and originality, and more and more of his day was spent in the confessional, sometimes twelve or fourteen hours out of the twenty-four : his correspondence grew until it was almost beyond his control : his sermons filled the church to the doors : and the famous Conferences held in the crypt of St. Augustin, which he had intended only for quite young people, were crowded out by their elders, while before long his scanty leisure hours at home had to be surrendered to a ceaseless stream of visitors of all ages and

classes who came to consult him on every possible sort of subject. He resigned himself to the task that God seemed to be putting upon him, and once and for all made a complete sacrifice of his time to the demands of others. Ten years after his appointment to St. Augustin the rheumatic gout from which he had for some time past been an intermittent sufferer became chronic, and from that date he was never again free from pain. As the years passed it grew worse, and there were periods when he lay agonizing in his darkened room, yet never for all that refusing a visitor or failing in the gentle courtesy which was habitual to him. One must not let that pass lightly. It was not the gesture of a martyr, wrought up in his torture by the very sublimity of the occasion and already come so close upon the edge of eternity that the things of time, good or bad, are levelled for him into one insignificance: it was the output of a habit of sheer heroism to which he had trained himself all his life long on the sole motive of the love of God after the model of God made man. He had taken as his motto the twenty-fifth verse of the seventy-second Psalm: *What have I in heaven but thee, and*

besides thee what do I desire upon earth? : and Christ, who had said that the whole substance of His life was to do the will of His Father, had said too that those alone truly live as He did who are ready to give without stint all that they have for their brethren. So that no consideration of personal convenience, no excuse of suffering or weariness, counted with him against the urge of that Christly love ' to spend and be spent ' for the souls that sought him. One feels that the perfection of sacrifice could go no farther. There is a satisfaction, and a noble one, in a life of whole-hearted service of an ideal : but if it be a quality of the ideal itself that there shall be *no* satisfaction in it, we are absolutely shaken by its sublimity. Not that the Abbé Huvelin regarded himself even so far as to shape his ideal like that : he followed, in the simplicity and wholeness of his devotion to the good of his neighbour, Our Lord's injunction not to let his left hand know what he did with his right.

Such limpidity of self-giving is not to be acquired by the mere wish for it, however much that might spring from appreciation of its beauty and holiness. Under grace, one is

what one makes oneself, and spiritually one gives out just so much as one is. True, God does at times use unworthy instruments for good—for such good, at least, as has what one may call a professional or other accidental connection with them—but for the finer work of supernatural culture He chooses His agents for their fitness to His ends, releasing their spiritual energy not through the channels of any exterior gifts or acquirements but direct from the inner reservoir of their souls. Thus, for instance, a congregation might listen with pleasure and with real profit to the oratory of a great preacher, but the difference of effect upon their souls will be almost as that between something and nothing if they hear instead a Curé d'Ars telling them simply to ' love God, because He is so good ! '

We are not surprised, then, to hear that the Abbé Huvelin lived a life of very great austerity and that from his early youth he had made constant use of bodily penances. When he sets himself in one of his Conferences to interpret the mind of de Rancé he tells us, unwittingly, a good deal about his own, for he shows such an understanding of that desire to offer oneself to suffer as a victim standing

between God and sinners, which in all great souls overrules the more self-regarding motive of atonement for one's own sins, as could only come from practical experience. The impulse behind the penitential life of the saints was never in the first place their own sanctification—or at least it ceased to be that as they grew in stature—but the desire, springing from their love of God, to save and heal and atone for the evil-doing of the world, to live the Christ-life in its essential character as the life of salvation of which both agent and consummation are His Passion and His Cross —*Christo confixus sum cruci*—and as he wrote to a friend, "You will never do good to others save in and by suffering. Our Lord gained the world not by His discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, but by His blood, His sufferings on the Cross." He had, and said so, no sympathy whatever with the familiar argument that the day of self-inflicted penances is over because modern conditions of life, with their lowering of the general stamina and their strain upon the nerves, are in themselves 'hairshirt and discipline enough.' He might have answered, "Perhaps, if you really take it like that: but do you? And if you

do, you will soon find that it is *not* enough." He was an extremist, if the word is not objectionable. He said, "God asks of us more than we shall ever give Him," and "Never lower your ideal, keep raising it always," and "Seek only *the* truth, not *your* truth." He could never understand how an ideal, if it is a true one, can be impracticable even under the simplest of conditions, and for himself, retired and uneventful though his life was, no one who knew him had any doubt but that he lived it on the highest spiritual level that he could see.

His detachment seemed to be absolute, and it was upon this that his limitless faculty of sympathy was grounded, for as he said, "Detachment for its own sake is meaningless, it is only creating a vacuum. One must be *de*-tached in order to become *at*-tached—drop the bad or the less good to seize the best," and by so much as for the love of God he forgot all interests of his own, by so much was he able unhindered to make his own the necessities and the sorrows of others. "The sadness of a saint," he said, "is something that he has taken upon his own shoulders from the common burden of all."

It needed, therefore, no effort for him to adapt himself to the case of anyone with whom he came into contact. He was all things to all men just because all who approached him found in him the same high sensitiveness and response. He was as satisfying to the massive and exacting mind of Baron von Hügel as he was to the impetuous ardour of Charles de Foucauld or to the simple demands of the humblest of his clients, and he was able without any abatement of the shame and sorrow that he felt in the apostasy and marriage of the ex-Carmelite Hyacinthe Loyson to show him the tenderest sympathy when that association was broken by death.

It would be a mistake to think of him as a recluse or as keeping himself aloof from mundane interests. He was in the world and of the world both by inclination and by calling. For all his understanding of de Rancé and his admiration of him one feels that he would not have followed him to La Trappe. He was a man of culture and taste, well-informed and widely read. Baron von Hügel thus describes him : " He was a gentleman by birth and breeding, a man of exquisitely piercing, humorous mind : he

could readily have become a great editor or interpreter of Greek philosophical or Patristic texts, or a remarkable Church historian. But this deep and heroic personality preferred to 'write in souls' while occupying, during thirty-five years, a supernumerary, unpaid post in a large Parisian church." And he could be *malin* (that untranslatable word), but always with a generous excuse for the object of his criticism. Listen to his shrewd comment upon a certain type of religious. "There are some religious persons," he says in his conference on St. Francis de Sales, "rather narrow-minded, who see only their own little convent and its circle in the whole world. Is that the fault of the convent? No. Those who say 'My Order,' 'My Convent,' would have said in the world 'My Family,' 'My country.' It is the *ego*, more or less transformed. . . . They do not appreciate the goodness to be found in the world. They seem to themselves to be in a Noah's Ark, and they put their noses to the window and see only a deluge of evil. A priest judges differently: he sees the souls at closer range. Père de Condren, the second General of the Oratory, said that he did not believe that there

were nobler souls in the first centuries of the Church than he saw round him at the beginning of the seventeenth. Such nuns do not take into consideration the souls whom God keeps in the world for Himself, or the sublimity of their vocation. They do not see it, and they think that only themselves are saved. Is that the fault of the Cloister? Certainly not. These people look upon their convent as if it were the whole world, that's all. But can't the same thing be observed in drawing-rooms?"

Like Christ Himself he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity. He had suffered many great interior obscurities and desolations and his soul had passed through many dark places, while for the last twenty-five years of his life he never knew what it was to be free from bodily pain. A distinguished English visitor, not a Catholic, has left this picture of the daily scene in the Abbé's reception-room: "Each entered in the order of arrival and was ushered into the presence of the priest who lay upon a couch overcome with the physical suffering which for years had distorted every limb with intolerable anguish. . . . A domelike head, covered with

sparse grey hair, lay upon the pillow : a shaking hand, deformed by years of rheumatic gout, was stretched out to me."

It is true, as he said, that no good is done but by suffering, for we do good only in the measure that we follow after Christ and there is no other way of that than by carrying the cross. It is a lesson reinforced by the example of every saint that has ever lived, yet we still find it surprising. Perhaps the figure of the Abbé Huvelin on his couch, or creeping painfully along the street to his confessional at St. Augustin 'his head bent over his shoulder, his face lined with wrinkles, every step a torture,' yet (as Baron von Hügel has said) 'radiating spiritual joy and expansion' about him, may serve to give us some glimpse into the reality beneath this apparent antinomy. Christ has said that if we come to Him—are one with Him—our burden will be light and our yoke sweet : they will not cease to be a burden and a yoke and our poor nature will still suffer grievously under them, but our oneness with Him will lift us into a world of new values in which the most inveterate contradictories are reconciled, lightness with heaviness, sweetness with bitterness, sorrow

with joy. We will learn there that grace is not an anæsthetic, quite the contrary, but that it not only gives a strength which enables us to do and to suffer what is difficult and painful but transmutes such difficulty and such pain into what, for want of a better word, we must call their opposites. It is, as it were, our participation in the mystery of the Incarnation—the infinite bliss of God, and all the sorrows of man, in the one God-man. "Strip yourselves," he says, in his conference on M. Olier, "love God, love your fellow-men—what are all these things that you regard as so important?" as much as to say, 'Be reassured: nothing else means anything to him for whom God is everything.'

One recognizes that nobody could have felt and spoken like this who was not living very near to God in prayer. Prayer, indeed, was the most constant topic of his spiritual direction, and there is abundant evidence that he himself had travelled far upon the mystic Way. But he knew, as he taught, that the aim of the contemplative life is the Christ-life, not the other way about: and that it is in union with God that we find ourselves most closely united with our fellow-men.

Like St. Augustine he taught that humility is the material of all Christian perfection : but it is to be the humility that proceeds from our measurement of ourselves not with man but with God, and it consists in our complete realization of our entire dependence upon Him. Without God we can do nothing good : the good that we do is therefore all His and only ours in that He does it through us. It means that God Who ceaselessly reveals Himself in all things here utters His own goodness in the medium of myself : the act is mine, the goodness of it is God's. The thought might tend to immobilize me did I not reflect that just because it *is* His—the Infinite, to Whom nothing is impossible or difficult—there can be set no limit to what I dare hope to do or to be, and I understand the meaning of ideals and of the courage and serenity of the saints. No less do I see the folly of pride and the blasphemy (one might almost call it) of contempt for any of my brethren.

" However great our sins may be," he says upon this theme, " it is our incurable mediocrity that shocks us most when we regard ourselves " : and his cure for this is to train

ourselves in the pure love of God, for love is ashamed of half measures.

The last words that he was heard to utter on July 10th, 1910, the day of his death, were "I shall never love enough!"

ST. BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS

Star differeth from star in glory says St. Paul, and we are well accustomed to variations, amounting at times almost to contradictions, in style and type and expression of holiness as exhibited by the lives of those whom the Church has officially pronounced to be saints, to be persons, that is, who are proved to have practised the Christian virtues—not on occasional impulse but with such regularity as fairly deserves to be called habitual—in a degree conspicuously above what is recognized as constituting a normally good life.

But in spite of this preparation one is scarcely ready to accept Bernadette of Lourdes as a saint, for at first sight (and perhaps even increasingly with further acquaintance) her life presents itself to us as so remarkably devoid of the features demonstrably common to all the other saints known to us that it is a real difficulty to associate her with them. A well-known authority on this subject, whose judgement and critical ability meet with respect in

all quarters, has given it as his considered opinion that " in all the annals of sanctity it would be hard to find the counterpart of the history of Bernadette Soubirous " for, he continues, " she did nothing out of the common, she said nothing memorable, she gathered no followers around her, she had in the ordinary sense no revelations, she did not prophesy or read man's thoughts, she was remarkable for no great austerities or striking renunciations or marvellous observance of rule or conspicuous zeal for souls . . . and yet she is to be proclaimed a saint . . . and for all future time, as long as this earth shall last, the Holy Sacrifice will be offered in her honour, and petitions will be addressed to her to intercede with God, the common Father of us all, to bless the creatures who are the work of His hands."

Heroic virtue has always been associated in our minds with just such manifestations as here are truly stated to have had no place in her story, and one cannot help wondering how, then, she can have possessed what seems in no way to have revealed itself in her words or actions and therefore, as it appears, in no way to have influenced them ?

But indeed, not with Bernadette alone but

with other saints too, one suspects at times that these outward manifestations that seem to us to be the very stuff of their sanctity may in fact obscure rather than reveal the secret of it; may perhaps stand towards it in something of the same relation that the vocal or instrumental rendering of a musical theme does to the inner *motif* of which it is the only feasible, perhaps, but not really the inevitable and essential expression. Words are, as experience so often proves, but a clumsy vehicle of utterance of the 'word' in one's mind: and it may be that audible music (even though we be unable to conceive of any other kind) is just as awkward a medium for the expression of musical reality. What if the circumstances of Bernadette's life were such that her humility, for instance, was already expressed and guaranteed by them? That her heroic readiness to do or to suffer whatsoever God might demand of her had no wider scope than the gentle bearing with such trivial occasions as occur to the most ordinary persons in daily life whether in the world or in the cloister: that her charity had no larger field for its exercise than in silence and obedience and cheerfulness under the irritating, but still not intolerable, curiosity of strangers or

the nagging of a 'commonsense' Reverend Mother: that her patience (the root of all virtue) had no greater strain put upon it than to bear with the importunities of well-meaning but inconsiderate admirers? It might be, then, that the essential sainthood, truly hers, had no more adequate instrument for its expression than these very narrow opportunities which though they detracted from its appearance did not affect its reality or its heroism. One might find a parallel in the case of an artist with nothing but inferior materials to work with, or of a statesman with only the affairs of a village to administer. It will be enough if we can find in her life evidence that this was indeed so, and that only by force of circumstances which were not her own responsibility did her reach so limit her grasp.

The life-story of Bernadette (she was christened 'Bernade,' but from the first was always known by this affectionate diminutive) is short, and except for the great event of the Apparitions of Our Lady (the whole eighteen were comprized within a bare two months) was entirely devoid of unusual incident. She was born on January 7th, 1844, when Louis-Philippe was on the throne of France, and the

first Apparition took place on February 11th, 1858, when she was fourteen, undersized, weakly, speaking the Lourdais *patois* and not yet able to read or write pure French. Her parents, feckless and incompetent by nature, but good Catholics according to their lights, rapidly muddled away the small property with which they had started their married life, and for several years before Bernadette had the first of her visions they had been living in the utmost poverty in a hut which had formerly been the gaol of the little town. They had barely the necessary furniture and never a sufficiency of food. It is said that sometimes the children would pick wax from the church candles at funerals and other solemn functions and chew it to allay their hunger. They used to go about the town and the surrounding roadways and fields searching for bits of old iron, rags, bones and such like refuse, for which they would get a very few sous from a *chiffonière* of their acquaintance and so add a little to their miserably meagre provision. Bernadette as the eldest, but also because she had that instinct for leadership which is so often the obverse of the talent for service, directed all these little expeditions, and in many ways supplied to-

wards her sisters and her brother for the neglect of their slatternly mother. But there were days when she was helpless under the agonizing suffocation of asthma, from which she suffered at intervals all her life through. She was no prodigy : indeed, the consensus of contemporary opinion is that, intellectually at least, she was more than ordinarily dull—she *could* not learn her Catechism, for instance ! But all who knew her at that time were agreed that she was quite markedly *gentle*, with the brave pitiful gentleness of those who know suffering —the patient, helpless suffering of the very poor—from their own experience, and are not embittered but rather sweetened and ennobled by it.

Still, to make her out to be a saint at this period of her life would surely be extravagant. She was a brave little girl doing her best, with everything against her : and her best was very small. Yet who may dare say that in God's eyes, with Whom there is no boundary of big or little or time or number or space, *anything* can be small ? It is within ordinary human experience that the bigger one is the less one is conscious of the distinctions that exist between things less than oneself, so that it is not diffi-

cult to understand that God reckons all things not by their size or importance (as we estimate these) but by their intention, within their limits : and that a thimble-full may be as vast as an ocean, and accomplishment be no more complete than effort.

Then came the Apparitions. One is conscious of an impression of incongruity and more than ordinary strangeness when one reads of them. For, first, the circumstances of the original appearance were entirely unfavourable to the expectation of any such thing, and Bernadette herself did not so much as suspect that it was Our Lady whom she saw—she said ' a girl, not bigger than myself ' : further, in her account of what she saw, repeated again and again to a host of questioners, she never varied from her primitive statements, though her descriptions of Our Lady's features, dress, and attitude were quite out of harmony with what must have seemed most natural to her from the type of ' pious picture ' then (and, alas, now too !) in popular vogue. It will be remembered that when a number of images of Our Lady (some of them accepted as unquestionably ' good ') were shown to her for recognition she rejected them all, sometimes with exclama-

tions of horror, but gave a distinct measure of approval to a copy of the very ancient Byzantine Madonna attributed by legend to St. Luke, which no doubt the good people who were examining her thought at best 'quaint' even if not altogether repulsive. This quite uncultured village child knew, without knowing how she knew or anything else about it, that true art does not mean the accurate presentment of the body of a thing but the faithful interpretation of its soul. And here one may fancy that one sees the earliest indication in her of the heroism to which her canonization has now testified—heroism, at least in the philosophical sense of being conspicuously beyond the ordinary.

Again, heroism is most nobly exhibited in constancy, and the constancy of this poor little half-starved, ailing, defenceless child, standing up to the alternate threats and cajolery, the menaces and flattery of civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and to the stupid if well-meaning efforts of pious sensationalists to get her to elaborate her simple narrative of what she had seen into something more consonant with their conception of what she *ought* to have seen, profoundly stirs one's admiration. She would not

concede a point to such insinuations, nor on the other hand would she go back upon any of her original statements, and she clearly preferred to say nothing at all about her experiences and in fact never did so except under question. Nor, for all her poverty and the hardness of the life which she had to endure, would she ever accept the smallest gift of money or anything else, and her determination in this matter influenced her family to follow her inflexible example.

One is bewildered by the spectacle on the one hand of the commotion occasioned by the recent events, and on the other by the perfect balance and calmness of her who was the centre of it all. The townspeople, the clergy, the police, the legislature, the army itself were set in motion all because Bernadette Soubirous, aged fourteen, had said, and stood by it, that she had seen 'a white girl, not bigger than myself,' in a cave on the rocky bank of the Gave, and that later, when at the command of the Curé she had asked the Apparition to say who she was, the answer had been "I am the Immaculate Conception"—words adapted to the comprehension of the child who, no doubt, had heard without very

much understanding of the Definition of December 8th, 1854.

Then she was sent to school, where she learnt next to nothing, not because she did not want to but because she simply could not. One remembers that the Curé d'Ars was ordained priest though the extent of his knowledge of theology was little more than that he loved God. In 1859 she was sent by the doctors to take the waters at Cauterets, and then returned to Lourdes, to the Convent of the Sisters of Nevers, as a sort of boarder under observation, until in 1866 the petition which two years earlier she had made to be received into their Community was granted, and she left her home for ever on July 29th, On April 16th, 1879, she died, being then three months over thirty-five years of age.

It will be seen that Bernadette's life, apart from the Apparitions which occupied such a small fraction of it, presents none of the features which custom has led us to expect in the lives of the saints. Yet, in fact, the one essential element of all sanctity reveals itself, on examination, in every detail of it. For heroism is not dependent upon, or specified by, the magnitude of the occasions in which it mani-

fests itself, and, studied closely, her life assumes no less than veritably heroic proportions. There can have been little flaw, and little that was merely ordinary, in the character of one who without any gifts of nature or of training was able by sheer heroic truth and simplicity to escape the multiple snares and pitfalls that beset her. The most famous shrine in the Christian world, an outstanding witness to the supernatural in an age of materialism, is founded upon her simple word. Nobody saw the Apparitions but she: upon no other authority than hers (now guaranteed by the Church) is grounded the faith of these unaccountable thousands who year after year flock to the grotto of Massabieille: and it is because of this that they believe, and thereafter experience, that in visiting Lourdes they enlist on their behalf, in a very special way, her powerful advocacy whom Christ her Son commissioned from the throne of the Cross to be to all His brethren the mother that she had been to Him.

Her sanctity was the sanctity of a child: but one remembers that Christ has said that only children are fit for the kingdom of heaven—"Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of

God as a little child, shall not enter into it." All those tremendous things which we associate with canonized holiness she 'received as a child.' As we view them on the miniature stage of her life they look to us to be trifles, but they were great big real things to her: and rightly seen, in their true perspective, great big real things they should seem to us too. To be holy does not—cannot—mean to be extraordinary. Since Christ made His own (the choice of God) the ordinary life of man, and for thirty years of His life showed Himself to be the Beloved Son of His Father by no greater thing than fidelity to the duties of ordinary human life, there is no excuse left us for lamenting our lack of opportunity. The canonization of Bernadette is like one of those occasional experiences which call us (uncomfortably, maybe) out of the unreal imaginings of our day-dreams into the sharp reality of the waking day: we understand, then, that to serve God truly does not mean to try to be someone else than ourselves, nor even to be ourselves but in other circumstances than those that we have, but to aim at being the best that we can be as and where we are. One thinks of Bernadette, three hundred miles from her home

and from all that life had held for her up till then (for she was younger than her age when at fourteen she saw Our Lady) yet peaceably content to finish the amazing story in the relatively trivial round of Convent life where nothing ministered to the recollection of her brief hour of splendour, and where in addition she had as Superior one who confessed afterwards that whenever she had occasion to address her she found herself almost unconsciously speaking with 'a certain asperity' as to *une paysanne grossière et sans instruction* who had no right to be on such intimate terms with the supernatural.

In the Process of her beatification the *Promotor Fidei* took exception to certain sharp sallies and other gestures of impatience which seemed to him to denote a lack of that perfect self-control which should be the mark of heroic perfection. One feels that he must have been no more than half-hearted in his objections, deferring perhaps unconsciously to the popular prepossession that the saint is a being not so much above as altogether outside normal humanity. But it is before all else important to look upon Bernadette as an intensely human person. From first to last she was just herself. She knew that she was ignorant, inexperienced,

altogether undeserving of the high favours which had been granted to her, and she never by word or deed displayed the smallest satisfaction in the celebrity that was forced upon her. Indeed, the evidences of veneration which she could not fail to perceive, quite obviously revolted her. One regrets that among the chief offenders in this regard were the clergy. It is incredible what they made her suffer by their importunities, pestering and pursuing her with questions and demands and compliments in the worst possible bad taste. So, too, in the Convent, where often when she was summoned to the parlour for yet another interrogation by curious visitors, she would come to a standstill outside the door in an agony of repulsion for the coming ordeal, not seldom bursting into tears before she could bring herself to turn the handle. It all seemed so stupid to her, such a mistake : " Oh, why can't they leave me in peace ! " she would cry. But she was always modest, courteous, patient with her visitors, showing obstinacy, gentle but unconquerable, only when they tried to force from her confirmation of one or other of the accretions to her story which popular imagination had been busy in supplying, or

when they tried to press some gift, were it the very simplest, upon her.

She could speak up though at times, and could return a pointed repartee to a foolish or tactless question—as, too, could the Curé d'Ars. But it was remarked that she never did this when she thought that it might hurt or scandalize.

Much curiosity has been aroused by her statement that Our Lady had entrusted her with three secrets which she was never under any circumstances to reveal to anyone. She made it clear, over and over again, that these had nothing to do with the Church or with France or any other nation, nor with any question of civil or ecclesiastical politics. It seems to be quite certain that they were neither prophecies nor revelations but concerned herself alone, laying down, perhaps, the conditions upon which her sanctification was to be guaranteed. One who has very closely studied the history of Bernadette gives as his conclusion that these secrets were probably to some such effect as that she should never imagine that the privilege which she had had of converse with Our Lady was due to her own merits : that she should never consent to profit in any material

way by what had happened : and that she should never do anything to attract notice to herself in connection with the renown that Lourdes was presently to acquire.

These, at any rate, seem to have been the principles upon which she ordered her conduct. She would not, though she was left free to do so, attend the consecration of the Basilica of Lourdes in 1876 except upon the impracticable condition that she might see without being seen, and all her life at Nevers was a testimony to the low esteem that quite unaffectedly she preserved of herself—*Priez pour moi, pauvre pécheresse !* were her last words.

To the end she was what she had been at the beginning, Bernadette, the poor child of Lourdes, doing always with her might what her hand found to do, little enough though that was. And now, by the infallible verdict of the Church, she is ranked as in her own right among the Shining Ones of the Company of Christ.

THE CURÉ D'ARS

EVERY now and then the Spirit of Christianity seems suddenly to burst the bonds of convention and reveal itself in the life of some individual in all its untempered purity free of the modifying and relaxing effects of that progress in science and art and philosophy, and the rest of its component elements, which we call civilization. It shows itself as a thing entirely independent of human formulation, divine, eternal, sufficient in itself. Conjugately, it exposes the emptiness and unreality in themselves of all besides, making us realize, in spite of our native prepossession to the contrary, that there is indeed nothing substantial in the very best and most satisfactory-seeming of them but what it lends to them. God is the truth in all that is true, the beauty in all that is beautiful, the goodness in all that is good, and only in Christ has He thus uttered Himself to the fulness of the capacity that a created nature has for expressing Him. Christianity, therefore, properly understood as

the perfect 'state of Christliness' (adapted, of course, to our use as a scheme of belief and of life) is in its own sole self all that there is possible of human truth and beauty and goodness: it is not only their one authentic standard, it is in fact the whole of their reality in no matter what medium they be expressed. Art for art's sake, or wisdom for wisdom's sake, are no less delusive as ideals than those which the coarsest sensualist sets before himself, for art and knowledge and all that in our different ways we apprehend as good, are so for Christ's sake, or they are false goods. 'He who is not with me is against me': we are against Christ, and the things that we love are against Him, not only when we oppose Him or when we ignore Him, but always unless we are with and for and towards Him. There is *no* other name given to us under heaven whereby we must be saved: no ideals or ideas, no term of effort, no ultimate exemplar but such as is in Him. It will, no doubt, sound over-exacting to some if one says that the test of all excellence in all domains of human achievement is whether it 'shows Christ' or does not; but what escape is there from that conclusion? For there are

two camps only, Christ's and Antichrist's, and as between the two neutrality is impossible. By our reaction to that test is the quality of our truth and goodness assayed, and it is the task of the Christian to build his life upon that ideal. The saints, the complete Christians, are indeed so few just because the task is so hard: but Christ has left us no alternative, for He has laid down that to follow Him will and must mean to follow nothing else—'sell all whatsoever thou hast': and again and again, if we are to be loyal to that call, we shall have to set our teeth and say, It is *not* true, It is *not* beautiful, It is *not* good, because it is not Christ. Christianity is of its very nature challenging and intransigent, and our hold upon it will be defective and therefore unproductive in the proportion that our understanding of it admits of shades and qualifications and degrees. But in practice we do, nearly all of us, at least tacitly so understand it: and more and more as the evidence seems, through all our senses, to accumulate that there *are* other canons of truth and goodness besides His: and it is in aid of our weakness that these outbreaks of the sheer Spirit of Christ happen

in the history of the Church and throw into confusion the orderly structure of accommodation between itself and its opposite by which we had unwittingly accustomed ourselves to live. When this happens some are frightened, some are incredulous and scornful, but the most are compelled to acknowledge the truth and value of what they see, and these are awestruck but grateful.

The life of St. John-Baptist Vianney, Curé d'Ars, is just one of these 'outbreaks' as we have called them. It was a life dedicated, with a wholeness which left nothing for any other object, to the service of God upon the model of Him who said that His meat—what He lived on and lived by and lived for—was to do His Father's will who had sent Him 'to seek and to save,' to give His flesh and blood and His life for His brethren: and Who had laid down that by no other sign should His disciples be known than that they had the love for their brethren that He had shown for them. There is, perhaps, in all the story of the saints hardly a parallel to such self-immolation for the souls of others as we find here. It is no exaggeration to say of the Curé d'Ars that he gave to his own personal interests

absolutely no care or consideration whatsoever : that he put all that he had to give of love and thought and health and strength and time entirely and without reserve at the service of all who needed him—and this for forty long years without respite or relaxation until, at the age of seventy-three, " I can do no more," he said, " it is my poor end."

Born of simple, laborious and devout peasant stock, John-Baptist was from his earliest years accustomed to the spectacle of goodness and piety, and no doubt too the open-air life that he was obliged to live during all his youth helped to build up a constitution able to support for so long the austerities and the unremitting strain that his priestly life was to involve. When he began his studies his only assets were his good-will and his industry : power of assimilation, or even of memory, he seemed to have none, and under each successive test he failed completely, his final acceptance for the priesthood being grounded on the assurance given by his devoted and far-seeing teacher, the saintly Abbé Balley, that his pupil was thoroughly worthy and good and would continue his studies afterwards under himself. But it would be a

mistake to think that he was stupid or to make a miracle of the improvement in his intellectual powers that seemed to follow on his pilgrimage to the tomb of St. John Francis Regis in the Vivarais. The bewildered student who appeared to be unable either to grasp or to retain even the elements of formal theology was later to be among the greatest of confessors and directors of souls, the wisest of counsellors in the spiritual life, the surest of guides in the way of Faith that the Church has ever known. The question that was asked of Our Lord might have been asked of him, 'How does this man know letters?' and have been answered in the same way, 'My doctrine is not mine but His who sent me.' 'Letters' it may be true that he never knew, and perhaps the world would call that stupidity: but all that wisdom of which letters are only the outer form was his as ever more and more entirely he gave himself up to God. To such has Our Lord promised that He will give 'a mouth and wisdom.' It is related that during the first two years of his priesthood as *vicaire* to M. Balley his curé used to set him to unravel the most intricate cases of conscience and was amazed at the

sureness of his judgement and the soundness of his solutions. But it seems to be true that with the majority of the people of Écully as well as with the diocesan authorities, M. Vianney counted during this period for very little, and that on the death of M. Balley there was no thought of appointing him to be his successor. Instead, he was sent off to an obscure village on the dreary flats of the Dombes where the people were not indeed hostile to religion as they were in so many other parts of France, but were for the most part practically indifferent to it and very ignorant of its tenets.

On February 9th, 1818, he set out on foot for Ars, a distance of about twenty miles, accompanied by the Mère Bibost (an old woman who was to act for a time as his housekeeper) and followed by his scanty stock of furniture in a cart. Four days later he was inducted as curé (his canonical title was really *vicaire-chapelain*, dependent on the parish of Mizérieux) : he was Parish Priest indeed, but of a parish so inconsiderable and undistinguished that there were none among his *confrères* who envied him his promotion. It is known that the Department of the Ain, in

which Ars was situated, was regarded from an ecclesiastical point of view as the most forsaken and unresponsive part of the diocese, and for a priest to be sent to a parish in the Dombes was commonly held to signify either that he was in disgrace or that he was useless. The annual stipend was five hundred francs—perhaps £20 at that date: other resources there were none. The village consisted of two streets lined with yellow clay-and-wattle houses, windowless on their outward side and facing round a courtyard of which the major part was taken up by a midden. In France farmers do not, as in England, live upon their farms but gathered into villages, so that some of them have a considerable distance to go to their fields. There were in addition three or four *estaminets*, and in a kind of open Square the church, with a wooden steeple, plain and poor and in very ill repair. The one-storeyed presbytery was next door to the church, and possessed a garden containing a few fruit trees. The surroundings could hardly have been more depressing for the new curé or the prospects bleaker, and he must have realized on his first day that he would have to build up everything from the begin-

ning. There were not more than fifty families in the parish, and of them barely half a dozen really practised their religion. It would, however, be unjust to say that the people of Ars were entirely irreligious, much less positively bad. Nearly all the women, it is said, and a proportion of the men, went to Mass on Sundays, but also on the slightest excuse they went to work in their fields instead : very few made their Easter duties : the children received scarcely any schooling or religious instruction, and many could neither read nor write : the four *estaminets* were full every evening, Sundays and weekdays, and there was much drunkenness and rowdyism : and dancing, the favourite and constant recreation of the village, was often of a very unseemly type. Another priest in M. Vianney's place might have given up in despair of doing any good, or at best have resigned himself to preserve, as he might, what little good there already was in the parish. But not so the new curé. He found himself in the midst of sin, which for him was the one and only evil in the world, and he could not tolerate that it should exist anywhere if at any cost to himself it could be averted. To sin is to oppose God—

think of it, *to oppose God!*—it is to affront His goodness: he was frantic when he thought of it. That was the source of the reckless energy with which he flung himself—the whole of himself—into the life-work for the sinners for whom he found himself responsible. He must bring them all to repentance and assure them of forgiveness, arm them against relapse and lead them on to holiness: for he had no less an aim than to convert all sinners into saints: it should not be enough for them to cease to ignore or hate or offend God, he would bring them to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him with all their heart and soul. Nothing had power to stop him, neither man nor devil, and he had to fight with both. His own interests—health, comfort, peace of soul itself—he counted for nothing. In his own body he suffered for them what they deserved to suffer for themselves: he wore a rasping hairshirt and lashed himself nightly with a formidable discipline, he ate so little and such poor food that it seemed a continual miracle that he kept himself alive on it, he slept (or rather lay down, for often he was kept awake by a racking cough) not more than a couple of hours of the night, and he allowed his body

no other rest during the day, no relief, no refreshment, no pause. More terrible still, he drank even of the bitter cup of their despair—he seemed to hear a chant of devils, 'He is ours! We have him! We have him!' or at night a whisper in his ear, 'Soon you must fall into hell!': all his life seemed to him a pretence and all his efforts wasted, he had perhaps saved the souls of others, but what had he made of his own? For a saint may feel all the agonies that accompany despair though he cannot yield to the thing itself: when such a cloud descends upon his soul he is like Christ in the Garden, crushed and exhausted but still with voice to say 'Thy will be done!'

Yet never did he for one instant waver in the task that his consuming love for God urged upon him—'to seek and to save,' to snatch back from eternal frustration the souls that their Creator had made to find their everlasting completeness in Himself—he *could* not rest from it unless he could rest from the love of God itself.

But before all else it is as the saint—the martyr—of the confessional that the memory of the Curé d'Ars most vividly lives. What priest does not know that it is *there* that the test of

his zeal for souls, of his love of God, of his likeness to Christ is applied—that it is in the administration of the Sacrament of Penance that the strain comes upon the genuineness of his vocation? To be patient and sympathetic, to sink one's own personality and convenience and curb the movements of repulsion or resentment or weariness that the tale of sin and folly and the hesitations and obstinacies of a penitent may arouse, to be temperate and just and gentle without harshness on the one hand or human-respect on the other, to remember that the priest is the servant, not the master, of those for whose sake he holds his sacred office, to understand that speaking and judging in the name and person of Christ —*binding* Him, as it were, by one's words and decisions—it is a grave infidelity if one's bearing be not such as would befit Him: to do all this well, is to draw heavily upon the best of the faith and charity that is in one, and one may rightly feel that it will demand something little short of heroism to sustain such an ideal faithfully for even an hour or two. What then are we to think—how are we to picture it?—when we learn that the Curé d'Ars spent daily no less than *fifteen*, often

eighteen, hours in his confessional, stifled in the summer-time, frozen in the winter, scarcely able to walk or even stand when at last he emerged from it, and that from the first moment to the last of those terrible sessions there was never a halt in the stream of penitents that beset him. Nor was there a halt, much less a change, in the attention, the patience, the gentleness, the zeal which he lavished upon all who thus approached him. And this not at Easter time only or at Christmas, but all the seasons through, year in year out, for over thirty years, up to within four days of his death. Indeed, though many were the other works that engaged his apostolic ardour it was in the confessional that the inwardness of his spirit and the spring of his sanctity most revealed itself. A simple enough thing in words—just fear and hatred of sin, the obverse of his love of God. Yes, but a hatred of sin which proceeded from a clear vision of what it really is—in itself, a destructive uncreative thing because it is defiance of God's will which is the substance of all created things : and in its import as a free human act, a shameful, hateful thing because it is the denial and rejection of God's everlasting

love. 'To be a saint,' he once said, 'one must be beside oneself, one must lose one's head,' and for his part he neither had nor intended any restraint or moderation in his struggle with the evil wherever he recognized it: he did not reason about it—God is love, sin is hate, there is no more to be said.

It is this *sense of sin* that gives the Curé d'Ars his special value for us who have to mix with a world in which it has almost ceased to have any objective significance whatever. What would he have made of the claim that right and wrong are convertible terms with the likes and dislikes of each individual: or that sin is nothing but the liberation, under certain psychological conditions, from the repressive hold of habit or convention, of primeval instincts in themselves no more moral or immoral than are hunger or thirst? He would have seen at once that underlying all such doctrines is the sheer denial of God, or at least of a God who can have any care over us or we any duties towards Him.

On which side of the argument should we expect to find Christ?

The Curé d'Ars knew nearly nothing about

psychology but he knew nearly everything about human nature because he knew so much about God. A saint does not need learning as others do for the wisdom to which, for all their learning, they will never attain. While others argue about sin he *sees* it—tastes and touches and smells it : it is disease, it is rottenness, it is a beginning of hell. And over against it he sets the love of God for the souls that He made for Himself, and being so near to God, so tuned to Him, he anguishes for the love thus scorned and defeated. That was why he *could not* give himself rest in his war against it. That was why in his sermons and instructions he beat and beat again upon the topic, God's love for men on the one side, men's sin against God on the other, and what came of it—' Cursed by God ! ' he sobbed in his pulpit, ' My children, do you understand ? Cursed by God, by God who loves only to bless ! ' That, too, was why day by day he tore himself at one o'clock in the morning from the sleep which after the scant two hours of uneasy rest that he allowed himself was just beginning to visit him, and stumbled down to his confessional in the church where already a throng of penitents was awaiting

him, many perhaps since the afternoon before, and where as the hours passed by he raised his hand again and again in absolution of sin with an ever freshening joy of heart and soul that ended by mastering the mortal weariness and the almost continual internal pains that afflicted his body.

'Do only what you can offer to God' was one of his sayings. It was his antidote for sin, a homely rendering of Christ's own words, 'I do always the things that please Him.'

It is well to remind ourselves that this wholly supernatural man lived, not as the story of his life might easily suggest in the heroic ages of Faith, but in the days of railways and steamboats and telegraphs—of at least the beginnings of that era of scientific advance which has since transformed the whole face of civilization—in an age, therefore, in which 'the evidence of the senses' has increasingly developed into rivalry with 'the evidence of things that appear not' and the faith which should be the life-stream of the 'just man' is running thin. For thus we shall be the better able to focus to our own sight the vision that inspired him.

Here was a man, then, practically of our own times, for whom, not speculatively alone but in the ordinary circumstances of everyday actuality, the only good was the love of God and the only evil sin.

ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

THE story of St. Ignatius Loyola is too well known to need re-telling here. The figure of the ex-soldier whose chosen career appeared to have been cruelly arrested by a malignant chance, and who turned with astounding readiness from a manner of life for which every circumstance of birth and tradition had seemed exclusively to fit him to one to which nothing in his previous experience had had any relevance whatever, is familiar to everyone. It has impressed itself deeply upon the history, both ecclesiastical and secular, of the post-Renaissance world, and it has in its time attracted on the one hand more admiration and on the other more animosity than has perhaps that of any other single individual within the last four hundred years. For St. Ignatius has a serious claim to a very large share in that renovation within the Church of which the miscalled Reformation without had, under God's overruling providence, been at least the indirect occasion, and that fact

alone has earned for him the permanent hostility of a large section of opinion all over the civilized world. He was besides a pioneer in a great many of the movements which were to put an end, almost within his own lifetime, to the deadly apathy and decadence, spiritual, moral and cultural, which were rotting the vitals of Christendom. Further, he was the author of a quite new conception of the religious life which has had its influence upon nearly every Institute or Congregation founded since his day, and of a highly systematized type of spirituality which has made a hardly less wide and lasting impression upon the general practice of the Catholic Faith.

On all of these counts, severally and collectively, he has been, and still is, lavishly praised and violently abused. It is the fate of dynamic men such as he to rouse both extremes of opinion just because they themselves cannot help being extreme : they may be loved or they may be hated, they cannot be ignored.

The more one learns about the state of Europe at the time of the Reformation the more one is appalled at the desperate straits to which, over a large part of the Western World,

Catholic life had been reduced, and the more one marvels at its rehabilitation and at the quality of the men to whose courage and energy that was due. In many parts, especially of the northern countries, schools had ceased to exist and universities had sunk to incredible depths of ineptitude: the teaching of the Sacred Sciences had degenerated into a round of dreary futilities, and secular learning had practically come to a halt: there were everywhere priests who could not translate a line of their breviaries nor even pronounce the words of Absolution, and who never opened their mouths in a pulpit or took any care whatever of the instruction of their people: there were Bishops, too, whose sole interests were worldly and political, and there were religious of both sexes whose stagnant lives, when they were not positively scandalous, were at any rate of no profit either to their neighbours or to themselves. And this is only skimming the surface of the matter. Rabelais, who was a contemporary of Ignatius, could have verified with chapter and verse all the topics of his caustic satire.

One understands how on all counts this age became one of revolt, for whether men admit it or not, when their religion fails them so does

everything else and they *must* strike out for something new to live upon, and it was dreadfully true that at that time many felt that in fact religion *had* failed. It is only when we remember the assurance of Christ that the gates of hell will never prevail against His Church nor He desert her while the world lasts, that we cease to wonder how she can have survived even as a remnant.

We need not dwell here upon the course of Ignatius's vocational development, for whatever specific object he may at the outset have had in his mind when he began to collect followers about him, his ideal very soon fell into focus as service—to be calculated without limit or reserve—of the threatened Faith. They would go to Rome and there place themselves wholly at the disposition of the Vicar of Christ to be used just as he might direct. They would call themselves "of the Company of Jesus," using the word in the military sense of a compact fighting force under one direct command. That form of the title is still in use in some languages but in Latin it became 'Societas,' and the name 'Jesuit' ('Jesuita') for its members was really an accident, being at first applied as a nickname in derision of their supposed arrogance

to themselves of a specially favoured intimacy with Our Lord. It is interesting to find the word used by the Carthusian Ludolph of Saxony more than two hundred years earlier, where he says that as here we are through the grace of Christ in Baptism named *Christiani* so in the life of glory we shall through Jesus our Saviour be called *Jesuitae* ! *

Again, it is beside our purpose to recall the many vicissitudes of the new-born Institute before at last it acquired the full canonical status of a religious Order, or to remark upon the attraction that it seemed from the first to exercise upon so many of the best minds of the day so that Ignatius saw rapidly grouping themselves under him a body of men of the finest quality and capacity both spiritual and intellectual. With them he founded schools for the Humanities and for Higher Studies wherever these were lacking and were needed — and that was nearly everywhere : he resuscitated the languishing Faculties in many Universities, particularly in northern and central Europe : trained a new and competent clergy to minister to provinces which heresy had ravaged unchecked by their late pastors :

* *Vita Jesu Christi*, Pars 1, Ch. X.

sent devoted missionaries to every quarter of the known world : and found men of high ability and zeal and courage to employ upon any and every charge which could further the greater glory of God. It has been said that the immense work in all these fields which was done by his Society at that time has justly entitled it to be regarded as the saviour of Catholic culture in the greater part of Europe.

To this service he subordinated every other consideration, and in the means that he employed for this one end he looked uniquely to their fitness for the purpose and cared nothing at all for subsidiary and unessential forms. So in the Order that he founded there is no choir, no habit, no assuming of religious names, no insignia of prelacy, no apparatus of domestic ceremony : all Superiors except the General are appointed, not elected : the noviceship lasts for two years, with a third year of repetition for the priests after ordination : and no ecclesiastical dignities may be admitted save and except under the direct command of the Sovereign Pontiff. To many of those who had been reared in another tradition he appeared as a dangerous innovator, and these made no secret either of their opinion or of

their hostility to him. Ignatius did not quarrel with them. Without any inclination to criticize the ideals or methods that approved themselves to others, he yet felt quite assured that for the kind and quality of work that he had in mind this stark disciplining of the means to the end was a necessity, and he offered immovable resistance to all the influences that tried to divert him from his plan.

All his activities were distinguished by daring, determination, and method, by a kind of ruthless logic, and by an idealism which never ceased to be practical. He was always a Knight, but always a man of affairs too : he had at once the vision of an artist and the caution of a statesman : he feared nothing except to be untrue to the best that he could see, and with all his powers of sympathy he was unable to find any excuse for what was small or second-rate or disloyal. So well did he hold the balance between the extremes of rigidity on the one side and of over-suppleness on the other, that he has been roundly charged with both. But his rigidity (which was then, indeed, absolute) was only for principle, and he was adaptable only in the same interest. He himself relates how at the beginning of his conver-

sion he determined to show his independence of all worldly conventions by keeping his hair and nails untrimmed and refusing to address people by their proper titles, thinking that thus he would acquire greater liberty and authority for his spiritual ministrations. But when he found that the precise contrary was the result he surrendered his resolution without demur.

But a saint is not a saint for what he does except in so far as that is the veridic outcome of what he is. If he *is* a saint the two will be commensurate, but not necessarily so to human vision, for the incidence of circumstance and opportunity upon which the former so largely depends is for God's providence alone to determine. The saints themselves knew this well, and that the most that anyone can do is no greater than the most that he means to do, and the nearer they drew to God the more they saw how little more than nothing that is. One remembers how after his great ecstasy on the feast of St. Nicholas, two years before his death, all that he had written seemed to St. Thomas Aquinas ' like so much straw ' so that he never took up his pen again and the *Summa*, that greatest of all monuments of human thought, remains unfinished.

The life of St. Ignatius, then, for all its magnificent achievement, has as its main significance for us the revelation that it affords us of what he was ; and in his case, perhaps more than in that of most of the saints, that revelation is very clear and unmistakable. For the course of his life ran patently along the lines of thoroughness, undefeatable idealism, and an almost *physical* grasp of the sovereignty of God's will as absolutely paramount in the least of matters as in the greatest, and all was tempered (like a fine steel instrument) with that sound sense of realities which is the principle of endurance and (contrary to what is often assumed) the basis of genuine sanctity. And it is probably not too much to say that no other saint provides such facilities for studying at first hand what one may call the ' mechanism ' of his holiness. Taking it in its broadest sense, it was an attitude of mind which would prefer any conceivable alternative to the sacrifice of truth and right and would never be content but with what is best and noblest, be their price what it might. Men of that type may be met with in many settings, not necessarily all Christian or even all religious, but they only come to their full expression there, for only

there can the human heart really find its true self. In his ' Spiritual Exercises,' the text-book of his School of Holiness, St. Ignatius traces the development under grace of such a soul and with a sure hand lays out its course, for he himself had lived it as he wrote it. Not that Inigo de Loyola was yet St. Ignatius when he came at last out of his solitude of Manresa, for there was still very much that he had both to learn and to unlearn. But he was ready now to do both : the ideal was irrevocably established, the resolution grounded, and for its implementing—ignorant though he might yet be of how that would shape itself—he was prepared. In proof that this is no exaggeration is the fact that he never had occasion throughout the remainder of his twenty-four years of life to make any substantial alteration in what he had written.

One might say, in very brief and summary fashion, that the method of the Spiritual Exercises is, by means of an ordered scheme of meditation upon the vital and fundamental truths concerning God and man and their mutual relations—the latter specially focussed in the life of Christ—helped by various ancillary rules and instructions, to bring a man to a

clear apprehension of the issues at stake, place before him the highest ideals of their treatment and fulfilment, furnish him with sound motives for choosing nobly according to the light and grace that he receives, and urge him to make his 'Election' (as it is therein called) not, obviously, for or against the service of God, but in regard of the state in which he realizes, thus enlightened, that he will serve Him *best*. By then he should be able to act upon certain conviction and he should be responsive to the finest ideals that have presented themselves to him: he should be safeguarded, too, from all danger of error, presumption, or delusion.

But the 'treatment,' if one may call it so, does not end with a reasoned election. Unless the service of God be apprehended for what (if it be sincere) it really is, a work, namely, of love—and of love, first, in return for love—it will be in peril from the instability and inconstancy that attach to all imperfectly motived resolutions: so the 'exercitant' is invited to turn to the consideration, with all the earnestness at his command, of the Passion of Our Lord in which His limitless love for men, translated into the medium of their own expression, is so consummately exhibited. And

this is clinched by an exercise in which through the argument of God's goodness to men, proceeding from His own essential goodness, are presented irresistible motives for their whole-hearted love of Him in return and their generous surrender to His will.

But apart from its intrinsic merits of logical cogency and psychological soundness the outstanding worth of the book resides in no small degree in the eminent commonsense which is therein allied with lofty idealism. The author sets himself to arouse the noblest and most chivalrous instincts of the human heart, but he keeps control of them : reason alone is not a sufficient spring of lasting action, for after all the mind is only a part of the man : but on the other hand emotion or affection, though they have greater stimulating power, rest upon a less permanent basis and have need of the services of reason as an armament against their own mutability. Hence in his presentment of the carefully selected subjects that he proposes for consideration he endeavours always to engage simultaneously the attention of the two faculties, thus ensuring as far as may be a unified appeal to the whole man.

That St. Ignatius intended his Exercises to be an exhaustive treatise either upon the whole of the spiritual life or upon the science of prayer in particular, no one would claim. Primarily the book had one aim, to effect the spiritual conversion of whoever would submit to its discipline, and as an almost certain consequence to indicate to him the special will of God in his regard ; and clearly a system which successfully does this will also successfully influence and guide the subsequent conduct of him who has profited by it and be for him a permanent reference and support. The manner of prayer (or rather, the chief manner, for the author describes several) employed to this end is what is universally called ' discursive meditation '—obviously, because the main purpose of the Exercises is to inform the soul through the reasoning powers of the mind—but the actual prayer-value, so to call it, of meditation is not the thought that it provokes but the movement of the will that follows upon the thought. The actual *meditation*, therefore, is the means, not the end, and that St. Ignatius was fully aware of this is indicated by the words of the 4th Addition to the 1st Week : " In

that point in which I find what I *desire* there will I rest without being anxious to proceed to another until I have satisfied myself."

Further, it is abundantly and unequivocally evidenced both by his letters to St. Francis Borgia and others, and by his own observed practice, that the Saint was a mystic and a contemplative of the highest order : yet in the Exercises there is no definite reference to that degree of prayer. The word 'contemplation' is indeed employed in certain connections, but as Father Joseph Rickaby, S.J., says, " St. Ignatius uses the word Contemplation in quite another sense than St. John of the Cross and other mystical writers. Ignatian contemplation is not a form of the Higher Prayer : it is what an artist would call a Study of a scene in Our Lord's life. We may call such contemplation a *mind-painting*." *

Suarez explains the apparent omission as follows : " In this degree of contemplation or unitive life one must distinguish the beginning, which is all that concerns the progress of its growth, from the end, which is union

* *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola : Spanish and English.* Burns and Oates, 1915. p. 89.

with God by a certain simple intuition of the truth. In the first stage one must follow the ordinary methods of prayer and meditation, directed to the end that one has in view : for the second, no definite form or method can be laid down since it is a very simple act and is exercised rather in receiving than in seeking, though human co-operation is not altogether excluded. It is for this reason that our Father Ignatius, while adequately setting forth all that pertains to the initial stages of this final degree of contemplation both as to matter and form, was content to direct those who would understand along the right path, for what comes after belongs to the province rather of the Holy Spirit than of man. He has therefore said but little about the actual union with God and the simple act of contemplation." *

He has said but little (if indeed anything) about it in so many words but a great deal by implication, for the whole apparatus of the Exercises is directed towards the closest union with God through a searching preparation of the soul for the Divine visitation whatever form that may take, and it goes as far

* Suarez. *De Religione Societatis Jesu*, Lib. IX, Ch. VI, n. 9.

towards accomplishing that object, one feels, as human instrument could without trenching on what Suarez here calls the *magisterium Spiritus Sancti*.

The prayer contained in the 'Contemplation for obtaining Divine Love' which crowns the structure of the Exercises—"Take, O Lord, and receive, all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will"—might have been written, word for word, by St. John of the Cross so aptly and authentically does it sum up the aspiration of the soul brought at last to the realization of God as the one all-sufficing object of its desire—"Give me thy love and thy grace, and this is enough for me." That there cannot be much lacking to the Spiritual Exercises as a veritable School of Holiness, and that they cannot be charged with falling far short of what is amply sufficient for the highest possible spiritual development of a Christian soul, seems to be at least insinuated by the fact that of those who joined the Society in the lifetime of its founder and were trained by him upon their model, four besides himself have been canonized: and it has been calculated that from his day down to the present

there has never been a time when there was not a Jesuit saint in the world.

Ignatius is one of the few saints who have, so to say, deliberately *explained* themselves. The main and obvious theme of his doctrine, clearly exposed both in the Exercises and in his own life, is the conquest of self; a plain statement of the fact that the service of God, in whatever shape it engage us, signifies no other thing than the submission of our will to His. And the first step to this must be truth in that most unpalatable form of all, truth about oneself, so that there may be an equation between our real selves as we learn them to be and the ideal of the Christ-life that the will of God may be done in us now as it is in heaven.

Nothing is to be too high or too difficult, but on everything there is to be the curb of reality, acting like a bridle on a horse not as a check but as a control.

His device was the *Greater* Glory of God: meaning that in this life the task would never be over.